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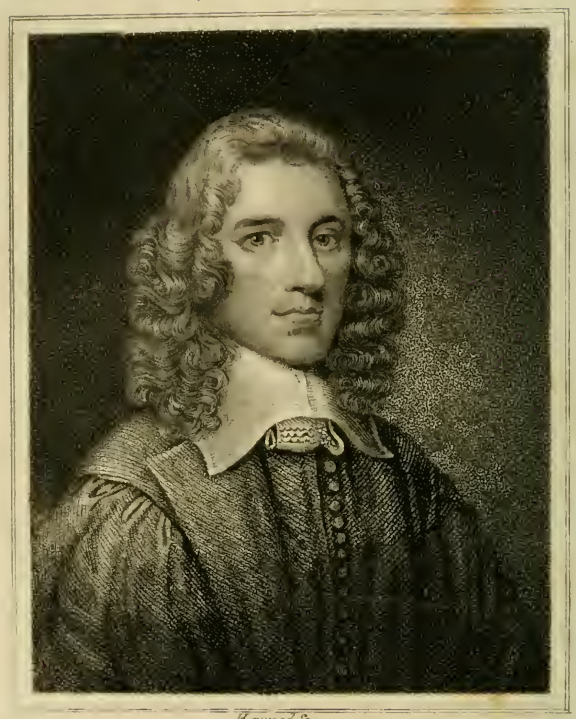

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REV^D STEPHEN CHARNOCK, B.D.

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THE

WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. STEPHEN CHARNOCK, B.D.

IN

NINE VOLUMES.

WITH A

PREFATORY DEDICATION AND MEMOIR,

BY

EDWARD PARSONS.

VOL. I.

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PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL

PREFATORY DEDICATION.

In preparing the Works of Charnock for the press, my attention has been particularly directed to our younger brethren in the ministry, and the students of divinity in our various seminaries of learning; and to them, I now dedicate this edition, with every sentiment and feeling of genuine concern for their present and future usefulness in the church of God.

My object in this dedication is not the solicitation of their patronage, to aid the circulation of these works, but to engage their unremitted attention to their pervading evangelical character, and to animate them in cultivating that spirit

of preaching, which most eminently accords with the genius of the gospel, the holy designs of its Author, and the eternal interests of mankind.

Whatever laudable attention may be paid to style and manner, the subject matter of preaching is of primary importance, and claims our supreme and most solemn consideration. If our old divines were too inattentive to the dress and ornament of their discourses, modern times furnish us with innumerable instances of the opposite extreme. Their unadorned or slovenly attire has been exchanged for a gorgeous foppery; and where they laboured in simplicity and godly sincerity to promote the glory of their Saviour, many of their successors, inflated with the vanity of oratorical pride, have laboured with equal assiduity and ardour, to recommend themselves as the *first* objects of attention and applause.

If the advantages of living in a more advanced period of improvement in the science of elocution were sanctified by

decided, devotional attention to doctrinal truth, and the holy ambition of "turning sinners from the error of their ways;" ---if the powers of that science were exclusively employed in the spirit of self-renunciation, to excite attention to the glorious realities of the gospel, we might confidently anticipate results of infinite importance;---results which would prove the joy of the preacher on earth, and the crown of his rejoicing in the heavenly world. Then all empty and hackneyed observations in praise of the preacher, would be exchanged for the silence of humiliation, the ejaculations of repentance, or the ascriptions of gratitude to the Alpha and Omega of salvation.

When the Romans heard the orations of Cicero, they exclaimed, "What a fine orator!" but when Demosthenes pleaded with the Athenians against the enemy of their country, the general cry was, "Down with Philip!"---That is the best oratory which rouses the mind to the greatest and noblest actions. And what actions are so great and noble

as those to which the Christian minister should endeavour to rouse his hearers? His first object in all his addresses to them is, to promote their own personal salvation; and then, to excite all the energies of their renovated natures, in unremitted exertions to extend the boundaries of the Saviour's empire. These are the unspeakably interesting objects which employ his thoughts, and animate his exertions, and for the accomplishment of which, he stands prepared to make any sacrifice. To ensure his success, he has recourse to no means but such as are sanctioned by the Head of the Church, and connected with the promise of his benediction.

The means he employs, and the motives by which he is influenced, correspond with the certainty of his success, and reflect the brightest lustre on the character he sustains. Knowing that however men are *pleased*, they cannot be *converted* by tropes and figures, by oratorical gesticulation, or by any arts exclusively human, he directs his attention solely to "the word of truth."

By that truth alone, as applied by the Holy Spirit, he "commends himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God;" and by that truth alone his ministerial usefulness is secured. He is therefore supremely studious of the subject matter of his Sermons; and, next to the inspired volume, he attaches the highest value to those writings, which he finds most eminently enriched with theological sentiments: and no author is too doctrinal for him who is at the same time experimental and practical. In the study of such authors, though imperceptibly to himself, he imbibes their evangelical spirit, and enters more fully into the fellowship of the gospel; while, at the same time, he increases the treasures of his mind, and his consequent qualifications to become more extensively instrumental in promoting the instruction and happiness of the people of his charge.

Under such impressions, I have prepared this edition of the works of CHARNOCK, and should I be the means of making him better known among my

younger brethren in the ministry, I shall have accomplished, at least, one important purpose. If a preacher wishes to recommend himself by the weight of his doctrines; he will find in the writings of Charnock, the great truths of scripture illustrated and explained in the most lucid and masterly manner. If he wishes to be distinguished by the evangelical strain of his discourses, and by the continual exhibition of Christ and him crucified; he will here find the characters of Christ, and the adaptation of the gospel to the circumstances and wants of man as a fallen creature, invariably kept in view. If he wishes for usefulness in the Church of God; here he has the brightest example of forcible appeals to the conscience, and of the most impressive applications of scripture truth, to the various conditions of mankind. And finally, if he reads for his own advantage as a Christian; his mind will be delighted with the inexhaustible variety here provided for the employment of his enlightened faculties, and his improvement in every divine attainment.

May the taste for such reading become more generally prevalent, and may that divine and sovereign influence, which alone can change the heart and qualify sinful men to sustain the ministerial charge, be more abundantly realized in all our churches.

EDWARD PARSONS.

Leeds, August 1, 1815.

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MEMOIR.

IN the composition of biographical memoirs, including only recent dates, a deficiency of materials may be in some measure supplied by information from surviving contemporaries, or by judicious selections from letters to surviving correspondents. But when more than a century has elapsed, and when all former contemporaries and correspondents are numbered with the dead, the biographer must content himself to become the mere echo of those who have preceded him. He may indeed decompose their materials, and give them the cast and character of his own peculiar style; he may indulge in cursory remarks upon particular events in the life, and certain traits in the character of his subject, without violating the rules of biographical writing. Within these bounds, however, he must cautiously confine himself; never assuming the power of creating materials.

Of the life of CHARNOCK the records are extremely scanty, and barren of valuable information. They exhibit none of those striking incidents and extraordinary evolutions, which afford so much entertainment and gratification to the enquiring mind. His biographical memoirs are distinguished by nothing which

can give celebrity to his name, but the general excellence of his character, his piety, learning, and theological acumen, in which he had few equals and probably no superior.

Stephen Charnock, one of the most eminent divines of the sixteenth century, was born in the parish of Saint Catharine Creechurch, London, in the year 1628. He was the son of Mr. Richard Charnock, a solicitor, and the descendant of an ancient family in Lancashire. At a very early period, he entered upon a course of preparatory studies in Emanuel College, Cambridge, under the more immediate tuition of Dr. William Sancroft, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury. When he became a member of the University, he had cultivated no acquaintance with religion as a personal concern, although he was designed for the holy office of the ministry. How long he remained a stranger to its illuminating and sanctifying influence is not known. But happily for himself, and for thousands of others, even in future ages, he there became the subject of that essential change, which he describes with so much perspicuity and energy in his celebrated Discourses on Regeneration. Of the change which had taken place, he gave indubitable evidence, by maintaining a corresponding spirit and deportment: and from that memorable æra of his life, he directed himself to the great object of his designation, with unremitted alacrity and persevering application.

After leaving the University, and having spent some time in retirement, he commenced his labours somewhere in Southwark, in the year which was noted for the first ravages of the civil war between the King and Parliament. How long he continued in this station is not known; but he was there honoured with that decisive evidence of his usefulness, which encouraged him to persevere in his appointed course with renewed ardour and hope. Seven or eight individuals, there ascribed to his instrumentality their conversion from the "error of their ways."

From Southwark he removed to New College, Oxford, where, Wood says, he obtained a fellowship from the visitors appointed by parliament. In 1652 he became senior proctor of the University; and discharged the duties of his office with great reputation and applause.

On quitting Oxford, he removed to Ireland, and resided for some time in the family of Sir Henry Cromwell, where he was treated with that high respect, which his temper and talents demanded and secured. During his abode with this family, he preached on the Lord's day afternoon, in the city of Dublin, with great acceptance, having the chief gentry and people of quality for his auditors. This course he continued till the restoration of king Charles II. when being ejected by persecuting powers from the exercise of his ministry, he returned

to England, and took up his residence in London; where, and in the neighbourhood, he continued for the period of fifteen years, occasionally visiting France and Holland, but without undertaking any pastoral charge, or engaging in any settled ministerial employment.

About the close of this period, he became pastor of a congregational church in the city; but was not what is usually denominated a popular preacher. In his day, as in ours, there was a tribe of religious wanderers, who, if less numerous, were equally capricious in their love of novelty; who were equally influenced by theatrical effect, and who, by the spirit of compromise, could as easily dispense with the realities of the gospel, for the vain allurements of rhetorical parade.—But Charnock was nevertheless popular. Such were his gifts, the excellence of his spirit, and, above all, the scriptural, evangelical strain of his preaching, that he was greatly esteemed and admired by the judicious and devotional of every denomination. Among those who sought the knowledge and enjoyment of divine truth, and who only estimated the ministerial instrumentality of man by its subservience to these great ends, he reaped a rich harvest of approbation and honour.

His claims upon public attention as a preacher are decided by his posthumous celebrity as an author. His writings, so highly valued for the talents they display,

and the doctrines they exhibit, are no other than his ordinary performances, his usual sermons, as they were delivered in the common course of his ministry, and transcribed from his notes. This circumstance is peculiarly worthy of remark, because it makes us acquainted with the man as he really was, in his every day apparel; and not as one prepared by assuming a fine dress to excite more public attention. And what a gigantic mind must he have possessed, who in every sermon, and almost every page, could command so wide a range of thought, and open such rich mines of theological sentiment! Except in his Sermon on "Sinful Thoughts," he did not appear as an author while he lived. Had he been spared to revise and superintend the publication of his writings, they would doubtless have appeared in much greater beauty and perfection.

As a *man*, Charnock was naturally possessed of excellent talents. He exemplified the connexion of strong reason and great judgment, with an exuberant and overflowing imagination. His powers were greatly strengthened and inured to exertion, by his habits of labour and study; while his constant devotedness to God sanctified them to the best of purposes. As a *student*, he was not only remarkable for the intensity of his application, redeeming many hours from the time generally devoted to sleep, and cultivating habits of thinking even while walking in the streets;—but also for an excellent method in the arrangement of his time which enabled him to do much in a small compass.

In manner and deportment, he was venerable and grave, like an aged person from his youth. He appears to have enjoyed all the advantages of an early and solid education, and was a very considerable scholar, there being scarcely any branch of learning with which he was unacquainted. One who had been intimate with him more than thirty years, says, he never knew but one man who had attained any thing like the knowledge Charnock possessed of the original languages of the Old and New Testament; and in that wisdom and general learning, he multiplied and grew as he advanced in years.

As a *preacher* he had but few equals. To the exercises of the pulpit for which God had best fitted him, he principally devoted himself and directed his studies; and even when providence had denied him opportunities of proclaiming the glories of salvation, he was still increasing his stock of knowledge, and preparing for the time when he should be again called to his public work.

He was somewhat reserved where he was not well acquainted, but when he knew and liked his company, he was very free, affable, and communicative. He did not cultivate an enlarged acquaintance, knowing how the ordinary set of friends engross that time which he could ill spare from his beloved studies; meeting with few that could give him better entertainment by their company, than he could obtain in retirement: for they

must have been very learned by whose converse he could gain more than by his own thoughts and books. On the Sabbath he made it appear that he had not been idle in his study, and though he consulted his privacy, it was not to indulge his sloth.

The doctrinal part of his discourses exhibit his knowledge of polemical divinity, and his applications and inferences the sweetness of practical religion. Nothing can be more nervous than his reasonings, nothing more affecting than his appeals. Though he makes great use of schoolmen, they are certainly more indebted to him, than he to them; he adopts, but he refines their notions, while he reforms their uncouth expressions, and dresses them in his own language; and so makes subjects, which in their original rudeness were obscure and strange even to learned men, intelligible to common capacities.

In a word, he handles the great truths of the gospel with that perspicuity, gravity, and majesty which best become the oracles of God; and we have reason to believe that there is no judicious and unbiassed reader, who will not acknowledge his Treatise on the Attributes to be incomparably the best on the subject in the English language.

In his younger days, he preached without the use of notes; but towards the close of his life, his memory beginning to fail him, he became a close reader of his

sermons; and to this disadvantage was added his reading with a glass. However, his manner was forgotten in the weight and interest of his matter; and he still continued to be heard with acceptance and applause, particularly by his brethren in the ministry; the most eminent of whom would devoutly sit at his feet, acknowledging that they obtained more solid instruction under one sermon from him, than by many books and sermons of others. To aid his pecuniary circumstances, or to render himself useful in private life, when he could no longer publicly serve the cause of religion, he devoted himself to the study of medicine, in which, it is said, he made great proficiency. His library, though not numerous, was furnished with a curious and valuable collection of books; but of this, his inestimable treasure, he was afterwards deprived by the fire of London.

The Oxford historian says, the Sermon on Reconciliation to God was published separately in quarto, 1680. The same year, the Treatise on Providence appeared in octavo, with a preface written by Mr. Richard Adams and Mr. Edward Veel. In 1682 his work on the Being and Attributes of God was published in one large folio volume.

"I have met with many treatises on the divine perfections," says a late author, "but with none which in any wise equals that of Mr. Charnock. Perspicuity and depth; metaphysical sublimity and evangelical simpli-

city; immense learning, and plain but irrefragable reasoning, conspire to render that work one of the most inestimable productions that ever did honour to the sanctified judgment and genius of a human being. If I thought myself at all adequate to the task, I would endeavour to circulate the outlines of so rich a treasure into more hands, by reducing the substance of it within the compass of one octavo volume. Was such a design properly executed, a more important service could hardly be rendered to the cause of religion, virtue, and knowledge. Many people are frightened at a folio of more than 800 pages, who might have both leisure and inclination to avail themselves of a well-digested compendium."*

In this volume on the Attributes, the Discourse on Providence was afterwards included. The second volume, containing discourses upon various subjects, appeared in folio, 1683. These two massy volumes make an aggregate of two thousand four hundred pages. There are two other discourses in octavo, not included in the folio edition; the first, on "Man's Enmity to God," from Rom. 8. 7; the second is entitled, "The Chief of Sinners Objects of choicest Mercy," from 1 Tim. 1. 15. These were published with a preface by Mr. Veel, 1699.†

Of the circumstances connected with the death of our Author, we have no particular detail. He died in

* Toplady. † These discourses will of course form a part of this edition.

the house of Mr. Richard Tymns, in the parish of Whitechapel, London, on the twenty-seventh of July, in the year 1680, and in the fifty-second year of his age. Immediately after his death, his body was conveyed to Crosby-house, the residence of Sir John Langham, where he had often held meetings for prayer and preaching. His funeral was attended by a long train of mourners, and he was buried in St. Michael's church, Cornhill, by the Tower under the Belfry. Mr. John Johnson, who had been his fellow-student at Cambridge, and who had known him intimately from the sixteenth year of his age, preached his funeral sermon from Matthew xiii. 42, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

He appears to have had some pre-monition of his approaching death, as he is said to have expressed his conviction that his sermon on "Divine Patience," would be the last he should preach. In this he was not deceived; for while preparing for the delivery of the next discourse, on "The Mercy of God," he was called away to rest from his labours, and to enjoy that mercy to eternal life as the supreme object of all his desires. Indeed all the while he was studying and preaching upon the attributes of God, his soul was so absorbed in his subject, and he proceeded with such vigour and alacrity, that his friends and associates were led to anticipate his near and gradual approach to the consummation of his happiness; while he him-

self experienced the most delightful antepasts of that glory and bliss, which should be his in the full and eternal vision of all the Divine Perfections.

Holiness was the ornament of his life, usefulness the character of his ministry, the gospel he had so often preached, the consolation of his dying hours: and while talent is respected, or virtue revered; while holiness of conversation, consistency of character, or elevation of mind are considered as worthy of imitation; while uniform and strenuous exertion for the welfare of men is honoured, and constant devotedness to the glory of God admired, the memory of CHARNOCK shall be held in grateful remembrance.

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THE

EXISTENCE OF GOD.

Psalm xiv. 1.

THE FOOL HATH SAID IN HIS HEART, THERE IS NO GOD; THEY ARE CORRUPT, THEY HAVE DONE ABOMINABLE WORKS; THERE IS NONE THAT DOETH GOOD.

PART I.

THE FOLLY OF ATHEISTS.

Explication of the text—The Existence of God, the foundation of all religion—We should know why we believe it—How discovered—Not only by faith, but by reason. Discovered in all creatures—The belief of it universal. —Idolatry and a multiplicity of Gods confirm it— —Never the subject of contention—This belief constant and uninterrupted—Natural and innate—Not by tradition—Not of political art or power—Not introduced by fear.

THIS Psalm is a description of the deplorable corruption by nature of every son of Adam, since the withering of that common root. Some restrain it to the Gentiles, as a wilderness full of briars and thorns, as not concerning the Jews, the garden of God, planted by his grace, and watered by the dew of heaven. But the Apostle, the best interpreter, rectifies this in extending it by name to Jews, as well as Gentiles, *Rom.* iii. 9. *We have before*

proved both Jews *and* Gentiles, *that they are all under sin.* And *v.* 10, 11, 12. Cites part of this Psalm, and other passages of scripture, for the further evidence of it; concluding by Jews and Gentiles, every person in the world naturally in this state of corruption.

The psalmist first declares the corruption of the faculties of the soul, the fool hath said in his *heart.* Secondly, The streams issuing from thence, they are corrupt, &c. The first in atheistical principles, the other in unworthy practices; and lays all the evil, tyranny, lust, and persecutions by men, (as if the world were only for their sake) upon the neglects of God, and the atheism cherished in their hearts.

The fool, a term in scripture signifying a wicked man, used also by the heathen philosophers to signify a vicious person, נבר as coming from נבל signifies the extinction of life in men, animals and plants, so the word נבל is taken for a plant that hath lost all that juice that made it lovely and useful. * So a fool is one that hath lost his wisdom, and right notion of God and divine things, which were communicated to man by creation; one dead in sin, yet one not so much void of rational faculties, as of grace in those faculties; not one that wants reason, but abuses his reason: in scripture the word signifies foolish. †

Said in his heart, that is, he thinks, or he doubts, or he wishes. The thoughts of the heart are in the nature of words to God, though not to men. It is used in the like case of the atheistical person, *Psal.* 10, 11. 13. *He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten,* he hath said in his heart *thou wilt not require it.* He doth not form a syllogism, as Calvin speaks, that there is no God: he dares not openly publish it, though he dares secretly think it. He cannot rase out the thoughts of a deist, though he endeavours to blot those characters of God in his soul. He hath some doubts whether there be a God or not: he wishes there were not any, and sometimes

* Isa. 40. 7. נבל ציץ *the flower fadeth,* Isa. 28, 1.

† *Mais* נבל *and* לאכחם *put together* Deut. 32. 6. *Oh foolish people and unwise.*

hopes there is none. He could not so ascertain himself by convincing arguments, to produce to the world, but he tampered with his own heart to bring it to that persuasion, and smothered in himself those notices of a Deity; which is so plain against the light of nature, that such a man may well be called a fool.

There is no God, * רית שולטנא *non potestas Domini, Chaldæ.* It is not Jehovah, which name signifies the essence of God, as the prime and supreme being; but *Eloahia,* which name signifies the providence of God, God as a rector and judge. Not that he denies the existence of a Supreme Being that created the world, but his regarding the creatures, his government of the world, and consequently his reward of the righteous or punishments of the wicked. † There is a threefold denial of God, 1. *Quoad Existentiam;* this is absolute atheism, 2. *Quoad Providentiam,* or his inspection into, or care of the things of the world, 3. *Quoad Naturam,* in regard of one or other of the perfections of his nature.

Of the denial of the providence of God most understand this, ‡ not excluding the absolute atheist, as Diogaras is reported to be, nor the sceptical atheist, as Protagoras, who doubted whether there were a God. Those that deny the providence of God, do in effect deny the being of a God; for they strip him of that wisdom, goodness, tenderness, mercy, justice, righteousness, and of all those attributes which are the glory of the Deity. And that principle, of a greedy desire to be uncontrouled in their lusts, which induceth men to a denial of providence, that thereby they might stifle those seeds of fear which infect and embitter their sinful pleasures, may as well lead them to deny that there is any such being as a God.

That at one blow, their fears may be dashed in pieces and dissolved by the removal of the foundation: as men, who desire liberty to commit works of darkness, would not have the lights in the house dimmed, but extinguished.

* אין אלהים *No God. Muis.* † Cocceius.

‡ *Not owning him as the* Egyptians are called, θεεν ἐγκὸσμιον. *Fugubin in eloc.*

What men say against providence, because they would have no check in their lusts, they may say in their hearts against the existence of a God upon the same account; there is little difference between dissenting from the one, and disowning the other. *They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.* He speaks of the atheist in the singular, the fool; of the corruption issuing in the life in the plural; intimating that though some few may choak in their hearts the sentiments of God and his providence, and positively deny them, yet there is something of a secret atheism in all, which is the fountain of all evil practices, not an utter disowning of God, but a denial or doubting of some of the rights of his nature. * When men deny the God of purity, they must needs be polluted in soul and body, and grow brutish in their actions: when the sense of religion is shaken off, all kind of wickedness is eagerly pursued, whereby they become as loathsome to God as putrified carcases are to men: † not one or two evil actions is the product of such a principle, but the whole scene of a man's life is corrupted and becomes execrable.

No man is exempted from some spice of Atheism by the depravation of his nature, which the psalmist intimates, *There is none that doeth good:* though there are indelible convictions of the being of a God, that they cannot absolutely deny it; yet there are some atheistical bubblings in the hearts of men, which evidence themselves in their actions, *Tit.* 1. 16. *They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him.* Evil works are a dust stirred up by an atheistical breath. He that habituates himself to some sordid lust, can scarcely be said seriously and firmly to believe that there is a God; the Apostle doth not say that they know God, *but they profess to know him.* True knowledge and profession of knowledge are distinct. This intimates also, the unreasonableness of atheism in the consequences of it; when men shut their eyes against

* *Atheism absolute is not in all men's judgments, but practical is in all men's actions.*

† *The Apostle in the* Romans *applying the latter part of it to all mankind, but not the former. As the word translated corrupt signifies.*

the beams of so clear a sun, God revengeth himself upon them for their impiety, by leaving them to their own wills, lets them fall into the deepest sink and dregs of iniquity; and since they doubt of him in their hearts, suffers them above others to deny him in their works. *Rom.* 1. 24.

The text then is a description of man's corruption. Of his *mind.---The fool hath said in his heart.* No better title than that of fool is afforded to the atheist. Of the *other faculties*, 1. In sins of commission, expressed by their loathsomeness, *corrupt*, *abominable.* 2. In sins of omission, *there is none that doeth good*, he lays down the corruption of the mind as the cause, the corruption of the other faculties as the effect.

I. It is a great *folly* to deny or doubt of the existence or being of God: or, an atheist is a *fool.*—II. Practical atheism is *natural* to man in his corrupt state. It is against nature as constituted by God; but natural, as nature is depraved by man. The absolute disowning of the being of a God, is not natural to men, but the contrary is natural; however, inconsideration of God, or misrepresentation of his nature, is natural to man as corrupt. —III. A secret atheism, or a partial atheism, is the *spring* of all the wicked practices in the world. The disorders of the life spring from the ill dispositions of the heart.

For the first, every atheist is a *fool.* If he were not a fool, he would not imagine a thing so contrary to the stream of the universal reason in the world, to the rational dictates of his own soul, and to the testimony of every creature, and link, in the chain of creation: if he were not a fool, he would not strip himself of humanity, and degrade himself lower than the most despicable brute. Atheism is *folly*, for though God be so inaccessible that we cannot know him perfectly, yet he is so much in the light, that we cannot be totally ignorant of him. As he cannot be comprehended in his essence, he cannot be unknown in his existence; it is as easy by reason to understand that he is, as it is difficult to know what he is. The demonstrations reason furnisheth for the existence of God, will be the evidences of the atheist's folly. One would think there were little need of spending time in

evidencing this truth, since in the principle of it, it seems to be so universally owned, and at the first proposal and demand, gains the assent of most men.

But 1. Does not the *growth* of atheism among us render this necessary? May it not justly be suspected, that the swarms of atheists are more numerous now, than history records to have been in any age: when men will not only say it in their hearts, but publish it with their lips, and boast that they have shaken off those shackles which bind other men's consciences? Doth not the bare-faced debauchery of men evidence such a settled sentiment, or at least a careless belief of the truth, which lies at the root, and sprouts up in such venomous branches in the world? Can men's hearts be free from that principle wherewith their practices are so openly depraved? It is true, the light of nature shines too vigorously for the power of man totally to put it out; yet loathsome actions impair and weaken the actual thoughts and considerations of the Deity, and are like mists, that darken the light of the sun, though they cannot extinguish it: their consciences, as a candlestick, must hold it, though their unrighteousness obscure it. *Rom.* 1. 18. The engraved characters of the law of nature remain, however they so defile and obscure them with their lusts. So that the inconsideration of a Deity is the cause of all the wickedness and extravagances of men. The apostle spent little time in urging this truth, it was taken for granted all over the world, and they were generally devout in the worship of those idols they thought to be gods. That age run from one God to many, and our age is running from one God to none at all.

2. The existence of God is the foundation of all religion. The whole building totters if the foundation be out of course. If we have not deliberate and right notions of it, we shall perform no worship, no service, yield no affection to him. If there be not a God, it is impossible there can be one; for eternity is essential to the notion of a God; so all religion would be vain, and unreasonable to pay homage to that which is not in being. We must first *believe that he is*, and that he is what he declares himself to be, before we can pay him

any worship. *Heb.* 11. 6. We cannot pay God a due and regular homage, unless we understand his perfections, *what he is;* and we can pay him no homage at all, unless we believe *that he is.*

3. It is fit we should *know why* we believe, that our belief of a God, may appear to be upon undeniable evidence, and that we may give a better reason for his existence, than that we have heard our parents and teachers tell us so, and that our acquaintance think so. It is as much as to say there is no God, when we know not why we believe there is, and will not consider the arguments for his existence.

4. It is necessary to depress that *secret atheism* which is in the heart of every man by nature. Though every visible object, which offers itself to our senses, presents a Deity to our minds, and exhorts us to subscribe to the truth of it, yet there is a root of atheism springing up sometimes in wavering thoughts, and foolish imaginations, and inordinate actions, and secret wishes. Certain it is, that every man that doth not love God, denies God; Now can he, that disaffects him, and hath a slavish fear of him, wish his existence, and say to his own heart with any cheerfulness, there is a God, and make it his chief care to persuade himself of it? He would persuade himself there is no God, and stifles the seeds of it in his reason and conscience, that he might have the greatest liberty to entertain the allurements of the flesh. It is necessary to excite men to daily and actual considerations of God and his nature, which would be a bar to much of that wickedness which abounds in the lives of men.

5. Nor is it *unuseful* to those that effectually believe and love him; for those who have had converse with God, and felt his powerful influences in the secrets of their hearts, to take a prospect of those satisfactory accounts which reason gives of that God they adore and love; to see every creature justify them in their owning of him, and affections to him: indeed the evidences of a God, striking upon the conscience of those who resolve to cleave to sin as their chiefest delight, will dash their pleasures with unwelcome mixtures.

I shall further premise, that the folly of atheism is *evi-*

denced by the light of reason. Men that will not listen to scripture, as having no counterpart of it in their souls, cannot easily deny natural reason, which riseth up on all sides for the justification of this truth: there is a natural as well as a revealed knowledge, and the book of the creatures is legible in declaring the being of a God, as well as the scriptures are in declaring the nature of a God; there are outward objects in the world, and common principles in the conscience, whence it may be inferred:

For, 1. The existence of God is not only the discovery of faith, but of *reason.* God hath revealed not only his being, but some sparks of his eternal power and godhead in his works, as well as in his word. *Rom.* 1. 19, 20. *God hath shewed it unto them.* How? in his works; by the things that are made, it is a discovery to our reason, as shining in the creatures; and an object of our faith as breaking out upon us in the scriptures: it is an article of our faith and an article of our reason. Faith supposeth natural knowledge, as grace supposeth nature. Faith indeed is properly of things above reason, purely depending upon revelation: what can be demonstrated by natural light, is not so properly the object of faith; though in regard of the addition of a certainty by revelation it is so.

The belief that God is, which the apostle speaks of, *Heb.* 11. 6. is not so much of the existence of God, as what God is in relation to them that seek to him, viz. *a rewarder.* The apostle speaks of the faith of Abel, the faith of Enoch, such a faith that pleases God: but the faith of Abel testified in his sacrifice, and the faith of Enoch testified in his walking with God, was not simply a faith of the existence of God. Cain in the time of Abel, other men in the world in the time of Enoch, believed this as well as they: but it was a faith joined with the worship of God, and desirous to please him in the way of his own appointment; so that they believed that God was such as he had declared himself to be in his promise to Adam, such an one as would be as good as his word, and bruise the serpent's head. He that seeks God according to his mind, must believe that he is such

a God that will pardon sin, and justify them that seek him in that way he hath appointed for the clearing the holiness of his nature, and vindicating the honour of his law. No man can seek God, or love God, unless he thus believe in him; and he cannot seek God without a discovery of his own mind, how he would be sought. For it is not seeking God in any way of man's invention, that renders him capable of this reward. He that believes in God as a rewarder, must believe his promise concerning the Messiah. Men, under the conscience of sin, cannot tell, without a divine discovery, whether God will reward, or how he will reward, those who seek him; and therefore cannot act towards him as an object of faith. Would any man seek God merely because he is, or love him because he is, if he did not know that he should be acceptable to him? The bare existence of a thing is not the ground of affection to it, but those qualities of it, and our interest in it, which render it amiable and delightful. How can men whose consciences fly in their faces, seek God or love him, without knowing that he is a rewarder? Nature doth not shew any way to a sinner, how to reconcile God's provoked justice with his tenderness. The faith the apostle speaks of here, is a faith that eyes the reward as an encouragement, and the will of God as the rule of its acting, he doth not speak simply of the existence of God.

I have spoken the more of this place, because the Socinians* use this to decry any natural knowledge of God, and that the existence of God is only to be known by revelation, so that by that reason any one that lived without the Scripture hath no ground to believe the being of a God.

The Scripture ascribes a knowledge of God to all nations in the world, *Rom.* 1. 19. not only a faculty of knowing, if they had arguments and demonstrations, as an ignorant man in any art hath a faculty to know; but it ascribes an *actual* knowledge, ver. 19. *manifest in them;* ver. 21. *They knew God,* not they might know him, they

* Voet. Theol. natural. cap. 2. § 1. p. 22.

knew him when they did not care for knowing him. The notices of God are as intelligible to us by reason, as any object in the world is visible; he is written in every letter.

2. We are often in the Scripture sent to take a prospect of the *creatures* for a discovery of God. The Apostles drew arguments from nature, when they discoursed with those that owned the Scripture, *Rom.* 1. 19. as well as when they treated with those that were ignorant of it, as *Acts* 14, 15, 16; and among the philosophers of Athens, *Acts* 17. 27, 29. Such arguments the Holy Ghost thought sufficient to convince men of the existence, unity, spirituality, and patience of God. Such arguments had not been used by them and the Prophets from the visible things in the world to silence the Gentiles with whom they dealt, had not this truth been demonstrable by natural reason: they knew well enough that probable arguments would not satisfy piercing and inquisitive minds.

In Paul's account, the testimony of the creatures was without contradiction; God himself justifies this way of proceeding by his own example, and remits Job to the consideration of the creatures, to read something of his divine perfections, *Job* 28. 39, 40. &c.* And this is so convincing an argument of the existence of God, that God never vouchsafed a miracle, or put forth any act of Omnipotence, besides what was evident in the creatures, for the satisfaction of the curiosity of any atheist, or the evincing of his being, as he hath done for evidencing those truths which were not written in the book of nature, or for the restoring a decayed worship, or the protection or deliverance of his people. Those miracles in publishing the gospel, indeed, did demonstrate the existence of some supreme power; but they were not seals designedly affixed for that, but for the confirmation of that truth, which was above the ken of purblind reason, and purely the birth of divine revelation. Yet what proves the truth of any doctrine, proves also in that act the existence of the divine author of it: the revelation always implies a

* It is but one truth in philosophy and divinity, that which is false in one, cannot be true in another. Truth, in what appearance soever, doth never contradict itself.

revealer, and that which manifests it to be a revelation, manifests also the supreme revealer of it. By the same light the sun manifests other things to us, it also manifests itself. But what miracles could rationally be supposed to work upon an Atheist, who is not drawn to a sense of the truth, though proclaimed by so many wonders of the creation?

Let us now proceed to the demonstration of the atheist's folly:

It is a folly to deny or doubt of a sovereign being, incomprehensible in his nature, infinite in his essence and perfections, independent in his operations; who hath given being to the whole frame of sensible and intelligible creatures, and governs them according to their several natures, by an unconceivable wisdom; who fills the heavens with the glory of his majesty, and the earth with the influences of his goodness. It is a folly inexcusable, to renounce in this case all appeal to universal consent, and the joint assurances of the creatures.

I. It is a folly to deny or doubt of that which hath been *the acknowledged sentiment of all nations, in all ages.* There is no nation but hath owned some kind of religion, and therefore no nation but hath consented in the notion of a supreme creator and governor. 1. This hath been universal.—2. Constant and uninterrupted.—3. Natural and innate.

First, It hath been *universally* assented to by the judgments and practices of all nations in the world.

1. No nation hath been *exempt* from it. All history of former and later ages have not produced any one nation but fell under the force of this truth. Though they have differed in their religions, they have agreed in this truth; here both Heathen, Turk, Jew, and Christian, unite without contention. No quarrel was ever commenced on this score; though about other opinions wars have been sharp, and enmities irreconcilable; the notion of the existence of a deity was the same in all.

It hath not been an opinion peculiar to this or that people, or sect of philosophers; but universal as the reason whereby men are discriminated from other crea-

tures, so that some have rather defined man by *animal religiosum*, than *animal rationale*. It is so united with reason that a man cannot be accounted rational, unless he own an object of religious worship. Therefore he renounces his humanity who renounceth a divinity. No instance can be given of any one people in the world that disclaimed it. It hath been owned by the wise and ignorant, by the learned and stupid, by those who had no other guide than the dimmest light of nature, as well as those who were distinguished by a more polite education. Though some philosophers have been known to change their opinions in the concerns of nature, yet none can be proved to have absolutely changed their opinion concerning the being of a God. One died for asserting the being of a God, none in the former ages have died for asserting that there is no God. Go to the utmost bounds of America, you may find people without some broken pieces of the law of nature, but not without this signature and stamp upon them, though they had no commerce with other nations, except as savage as themselves, who are but one remove from brutes. Yet they were possessed with the notion of a Supreme Being; had an object of religious adoration; put up prayers to the deity they owned, for the good they wanted, and the diverting the evils they feared. Not one nation of the world known in the time of the Romans, were without their religious ceremonies, whereby they signified their devotion to a deity. They had their places of worship, where they made their vows, presented their prayers, offered their sacrifices, and implored the assistance of what they thought to be a God; and in their distresses run immediately, without any deliberation, to their gods; so that the notion of a deity was as inward and settled in them as their own souls, and indeed runs in the blood of mankind. The distempers of the understanding cannot utterly deface it; you shall scarce find the most distracted madman in his raving fits to deny a God, though he may blaspheme and fancy himself one.

2. Nor doth the idolatry and multiplicity of gods in the world weaken, but *confirm this universal consent*.

Whatsoever unworthy conceits men have had of God, or whatsoever degrading representations they have made of him, yet they all concur in this, that there is a Supreme Power to be adored. Though one people worshipped the sun, others the fire, and the Egyptians their rivers, gardens, and fields; yet the notion of a Deity existent, who created and governed the world, and conferred daily benefits upon them, was maintained by all, though applied to the stars, and in part to those sordid creatures. All the Dagons in the world establish this truth, and fall down before it. Had not the nations owned the being of a God, they had never offered incense to an idol. Had there not been a deep impression of a Deity, they had never exalted creatures below themselves to the honour of altars. Men could not so easily have been deceived by false deities, if they had not had a notion of a real one. Their fondness to set up others in the place of God, evidenced a natural knowledge that there was one, who had a right to be worshipped. If there were not this sentiment of a Deity, no man would ever have made an image, worshipped it, and prayed to it, and said *deliver me, for thou art my God, Isa.* xliv. 17. They applied a general notion to a particular image. The difference is in the manner, and immediate object of worship, not in the formal ground of worship. The worship sprung from a true principle, though it was not applied to a right object. While they were rational creatures, they could not deface the notion; yet while they were corrupt creatures it was not difficult to apply themselves to a wrong object from a true principle. A blind man knows he hath a way to go as well as one that sees, but because of his blindness he may miss the way and stumble into a ditch. No man would be imposed upon to take a Bristol stone instead of a diamond, if he did not know that there were such things as diamonds in the world; nor any man spread forth his hands to an idol, if he were altogether without the sense of a Deity. Whether it be a false or a true God men apply to, yet in both, the natural sentiment of a God is evidenced; all

their mistakes were grafts inserted in this stock, since they would multiply gods rather than deny a Deity.

* How should such a general submission be entered into by all the world, so as to adore things of a base alloy, if the force of religion were not such, that in any fashion a man would seek the satisfaction of his natural instinct to some object of worship? This great diversity confirms this consent to be a good argument, for it evidenceth it not to be a cheat, combination, or conspiracy to deceive, or a mutual intelligence, but every one finds it in his climate, yea in himself. People would never have given the title of a god to men or brutes, had there not been a pre-existing, and unquestioned persuasion, that there was such a being, how else should the notion of a God come into their minds, the notion that there is a God must be more ancient.

3. Whatsoever disputes there have been in the world, *the existence of God was never the subject of contention.* All other things have been questioned. What jarrings were there among Philosophers about natural things, into how many parties were they split, with what animosities did they maintain their several judgments? But we hear of no controversies about the existence of a Supreme Being. This never met with any considerable contradiction: No nation, that hath put other things to question, would ever suffer this to be disparaged, so much as by a public doubt. † We find among the Heathen, contentions about the nature of God, and the number of gods; some asserted an innumerable multitude of gods, some affirmed God to be subject to birth and death, some affirmed the entire world was God; others fancied him to be a circle of a bright fire; others that he was a spirit diffused through the whole world: yet they unanimously concurred in this, as the judgment of universal reason, that there was such a Sovereign Being. And those that were sceptical in every thing else, and asserted that there was

* Charron de la Sagesse, Liv. 1. chap. 7. p. 43, 44. Gassend. Phys. § 1. lib. 4. cap. 2. p. 291.

† Amyrant des. Religion, p. 50.

nothing certain, professed a certainty in this. The question was not whether there was a First Cause, but *what* it was. * It is much the same thing, as the disputes about the nature and matter of the heavens, the sun and planets, though there be great diversity of judgments, yet all agree that there are heavens, sun, and planets, so all the contentions about the nature of God, confirm that there is a God, since there was never a public formal debate about his existence. Whatever differences and contentions have prevailed among men upon other subjects, they never called this doctrine in question; and what was never subjected to any controversy, but acknowledged by the whole world, hath reason to be embraced as a truth without any doubt.

4. This universal consent is not *prejudiced by some few Atheists.* History doth not reckon twenty professed Atheists in all ages in the compass of the whole world; and we have not the name of any one absolute Atheist upon record in scripture: Yet it is questioned whether any of them, noted in history with that infamous name, were down-right deniers of the existence of God, but rather because they disparaged the deities worshipped by the nations where they lived, as being of a clearer reason to discern, that those qualities, vulgarly attributed to their gods, as lust and luxury, wantonness and quarrels, were unworthy of the nature of a God. But suppose they were really what they are termed to be, what are they to the multitude of men that have sprung out of the loins of Adam? And were these atheists many more than they are, still they were not sufficient to weigh down the contrary consent of the whole world, and bear down an universal impression. Should the laws of a country, agreed universally to by the whole body of the people, be accounted vain, because a hundred men of those millions disapprove of them, when not their reason, but their folly and base interest persuades them to dislike them, and dispute against them? What if some men are blind, shall any conclude from thence that eyes are not natural

* Gassend. Phys. § 1. lib. 4. cap. 2. p. 291.

to men? shall we say that the notion of the existence of God is not natural to men, because a very small number have been of a contrary opinion? shall a man in a dungeon, that never saw the sun, deny that there is a sun, because one or two blind men tell him there is none, when thousands assure him there is? Why should then the exceptions of a few, not one to millions, discredit that which is admitted as true by the joint consent of the world? Add this too, that if those that are reported to be atheists had had any considerable reason to step aside from the common persuasion of the whole world, it is a wonder it met not with entertainment by great numbers of those, who, by reason of their notorious wickedness, and inward disquiets, might reasonably be thought to wish in their hearts that there were no God. It is strange if there were any reason on their side, that in so long a space of time, as hath run out from the creation of the world, there could not be engaged a considerable number to frame a Society for the profession of it. It hath died with the person that started it, and vanished as soon as it appeared.

To conclude this, is it not folly for any man to deny or doubt of the being of a God, to dissent from all mankind, and stand in contradiction to human nature? What is *the general dictate of nature is a certain truth.* It is impossible, that nature can naturally and universally lie. And therefore those that ascribe all to nature, and set it in the place of God, contradict themselves, if they give not credit to it in that which it universally affirms. * A general consent of all nations is to be esteemed as a law of nature. Nature cannot plant in the minds of all men an assent to a falsity, for then the laws of nature would be destructive to the reason of men. How is it possible, that a falsity should be a persuasion spread through all nations, engraven upon the minds of men, men of the most towering, and men of the most creeping understanding; that they should consent to it in all places, and in those places where the nations have not had any known com-

* Cicero.

merce with the rest of the world? a consent not settled by any law of man to constrain people to a belief of it; and indeed it is impossible that any law of man can constrain the belief of the mind. Would not he deservedly be accounted a fool, that should deny that to be gold which hath been tried and examined, and hath passed every test? What excess of folly would it be for him to deny it to be true gold, if it had been tried by all that had skill in that metal in all nations in the world?

Secondly, It hath been a *constant and uninterrupted consent*. It hath been as ancient as the first age of the world; no man is able to mention any time, from the beginning of the world, wherein this notion hath not been universally owned; it is as old as mankind, and hath run along with the course of the sun, nor can the date be fixed lower than that.

1. In *all the changes* of the world, this hath been maintained. In the overturnings of the government of states, the alteration of modes of worship, this hath stood unshaken. The reasons upon which it was founded were in all revolutions of time accounted satisfactory and convincing, nor could absolute atheism in the changes of any laws ever gain the favour of any one body of people to be established by a law. When the honour of the heathen idols was laid in the dust, this suffered no impair. The being of one God was more vigorously owned, when the unreasonableness of a multiplicity of gods was manifest; and grew taller by the detection of counterfeits. When other parts of the law of nature have been violated by some nations, this hath maintained its standing. The long series of ages hath been so far from blotting it out, that it hath more strongly confirmed it, and maketh further progress in the confirmation of it. Time which hath eaten out the strength of other things, and blasted human inventions, hath not been able to consume this. The discovery of all other impostures, never made this to be suspected as one. It will not be easy to name any imposture that hath walked perpetually in the world without being discovered by some nation or other. Falsities have never been so universally and constantly owned,

without public controul and question. And since the world hath detected many errors of the former age, and learning been increased, this hath been so far from being dimmed, that it hath shone out clearer with the increase of natural knowledge, and received fresh and more vigorous confirmations.

2. The *fears and anxieties* in the consciences of men, have given sufficient occasion to root it out, had it been possible. If the notion of the existence of God, had been possible to have been erased from the minds of men, they would have done it rather than have suffered so many troubles in their souls upon the commission of sin; since there did not want wickedness and wit in so many corrupt ages to have attempted it, and prospered in it, had it been possible. How comes it therefore to pass, that such a multitude of profligate persons that have been in the world, should not have rooted out this principle, and dispossessed the mind of that which gave birth to their tormenting fears? How is it possible that all should agree together in a thing which created fear, and an obligation against the interest of the flesh, if it had been free for men to discharge themselves of it? No man, as far as corrupt nature bears sway in him, is willing to live controuled.

The first man would rather be a *God* himself than be under one. Why should men continue in this notion, which shackled them in their vile inclinations, if it had been in their power utterly to deface it? If it were an imposture, how comes it to pass that all the wicked could never discover that to be a cheat, which kept them in continual alarms? Could they want the will to shake off such apprehensions? As Adam, so all his posterity are desirous to hide themselves from God upon the commission of sin; and by the same reason they would hide God from their souls. What is the reason they could never attain their will, and their wish, by all their endeavours? Could they possibly have satisfied themselves that there were no God, they had discarded their fears, the disturbers of their repose, and been unbridled in their pleasures. The wickedness of the world would never

have preserved that which was a perpetual molestation to it, had it been possible to deliver themselves from it.

But since men, under the turmoils and lashes of their own consciences, could never bring their hearts to a settled dissent from this truth; it evidences that as it took its birth at the beginning of the world, it cannot expire, no not in the ashes of it, nor in any thing, but the reduction of the soul to that nothing from whence it sprung. This conception is so perpetual, that the nature of the soul must be dissolved before it be rooted out, nor can it be extinct whilst the soul endures.

3. Let it be considered also, that *Satan deems it impossible to root out this sentiment.* It seems to be so perpetually fixed, that the devil did not think fit to tempt man to the denial of the existence of a Deity, but persuaded him to believe he might ascend to that dignity, and become a God himself, *Gen.* 3. 1, 5. *Ye shall become as Gods.* He owns God in the question he asks the woman, and persuades our first parents to be gods themselves. And in all stories, both ancient and modern, the devil was never able to tincture men's minds with a professed denial of the Deity, which would have opened a door to a world of more wickedness than hath been acted, and took away the bar to the breaking out of that evil which is naturally in the hearts of men, to the greater prejudice of human societies. He wanted not malice to rase out all the notions of God, but power: He knew it was impossible to effect it, and therefore in vain to attempt it. He set up himself in several places of the ignorant world as a god, but never was able to overthrow the opinion of the being of a God: The impressions of a Deity were so strong as not to be struck out by the malice and power of hell. What a folly is it then in any to contradict or doubt this truth, which all the periods of time have not been able to wear out; which all the wars and quarrels of men with their own consciences, have not been able to destroy; which ignorance and debauchery, its two greatest enemies, cannot weaken; which all the falsehoods and errors, which have reigned in the world, have not been able to banish; which lives in the consents of

men in spite of all their wishes to the contrary, and hath grown stronger and shone clearer by the improvements of natural reason?

Thirdly, It is *natural and innate;* * which pleads strongly for the perpetuity of it. It is natural, though some think it not a principle writ in the heart of man; it is so natural that every man is born with a restless instinct to be of some kind of religion or other, which implies some object of religious worship. The impression of a Deity is as common as reason, and of the same age with reason. † It is a relique of knowledge after the fall of Adam, like fire under ashes, which sparkles as soon as ever the heap of ashes is opened. A notion sealed up in the soul of every man; ‡ or how could those people, who were unknown to one another, separated by seas and mounts, differing in various customs and manners of living, and who had no natural intelligence one with another, light upon this as a common sentiment, if they had not been guided by one uniform reason in all their minds, by one nature common to them all, though their climates be different, their tempers and constitutions various, their imaginations in some things as distant from one another as heaven is from earth, the ceremonies of their religion not all of the same kind; yet wherever you find human nature, you find this settled persuasion. So that the notion of a God seems to be interwoven with the nature of man, and is the first natural branch of common reason, or upon either the first inspection of a man into himself and his own state and constitution, or upon the first sight of any external visible object. Nature within man, and nature without man agree to form this sentiment, that there is a God. It is as natural as any thing we call a common principle. One thing which is called a common principle and natural, is, that the whole is greater than the parts. If this be not born with us, yet the exercise of reason, essential to man, settles it as a certain maxim; upon the dividing any thing into several parts,

* Fink. Eph. 6. *pag.* 10, 11. † King *on* Jonah, *pag.* 16.
‡ Amyrant *des Religions*, p. 6, 7, 8, 9.

he finds every part less than when they were altogether. By the same exercise of reason, we cannot cast our eyes upon any thing in the world, or exercise our understanding upon ourselves, but we must presently imagine, there was some cause of those things, some cause of myself and my own being; so that this truth is as natural to man, as any thing he can call most natural or a common principle. It must be confessed by all, that there is a law of nature written upon the hearts of men, which directs them to commendable actions, if they will attend to the writing in their own consciences. This law cannot be considered without the notice of a law-giver. For it is but a natural and obvious conclusion, that some superior hand engrafted those principles in man, since he finds something in him accusing him upon the pursuit of uncomely actions, though his heart be strongly inclined to them; man knows he never planted this principle of reluctancy in his own soul; he can never be the cause of that, which he cannot be friends with. If he were the cause of it, why doth he not rid himself of it? No man would endure a thing that doth frequently molest and disquiet him, if he could cashier it. It is therefore sown in man by some hand more powerful than man, and which is so rooted, that all the force that man can use cannot pull it up. If therefore this principle be natural in man, and the law of nature be natural, the notion of a law-giver must be as natural as the notion of a printer, or that there is a printer is obvious upon the sight of a stamp impressed. After this the multitude of effects in the world step in to strengthen this beam of natural light, and the direct conclusion from thence is, that that power which made those outward objects, implanted this inward principle: this is sown in us, born with us, and grows with our growth; or as one saith, * it is like letters carved upon the bark of a young plant, which grows up together with us, and the longer it grows the letters are more legible. This is the ground of this universal consent, and why it may well be termed natural.

This will more evidently appear to be natural because,

* *Charleton.*

1. This consent could not be by mere tradition. 2. Nor by any mutual intelligence of governors to keep people in awe, which are two things the atheist pleads: the first hath no strong foundation, and the other is as absurd and foolish, as it is wicked and abominable. 3. Nor was it fear first introduced it.

1. It could not be *by mere tradition.* Many things indeed are entertained by posterity, which their ancestors delivered to them, and that out of a common reverence to their fore-fathers, and an opinion, that they had a better prospect of things than the increase of the corruption of succeeding ages would permit them to have. But if this be a tradition handed from our ancestors, they also must receive it from theirs, we must then ascend to the first man; we cannot else escape the confusion of running into infinite; was it then the only tradition he left to them, is it not probable he acquainted them with other things in conjunction with this, the nature of God, the way to worship him, the manner of the world's existence, and with his own state? We may reasonably suppose him to have a good stock of knowledge, and what is become of it? It cannot be supposed, that the first man should acquaint his posterity with an object of worship, and leave them ignorant of the mode, and the end of worship; we find in scripture his immediate posterity did the first in sacrifices, and without doubt they were not ignorant of the other: how come men to be so uncertain in all other things, and so confident of this, if it were only a tradition? How did debates and irreconcilable questions start up concerning other things, and this remain untouched, but by a small number? Whatsoever tradition the first man left besides this, is lost, and no way recoverable, but by the revelation God hath made in his word.

How comes it to pass, that this tradition of a God is longer lived than all the rest, which we may suppose man left to his immediate descendants? How come men to retain the one and forget the other? What was the reason this survived the ruin of the rest, and surmounted the uncertainties into which the others sunk? Was it likely it should be handed down alone without other attendants on

it at first? Why did it not expire among the Americans, who have lost the account of their own descent, and the stock from whence they sprung: and cannot reckon above eight hundred or a thousand years at most? Why was not the manner of the worship of a God transmitted as well as that of his existence? How came men to dissent in their opinions concerning his nature, whether he was corporeal or incorporeal, finite or infinite, omnipresent or limited? Why were not men as negligent to transmit this of his existence as that of his nature? No reason can be rendered for the security of this above the other, but that there is so clear an impression of a Deity upon the minds of men, such traces and shadows of him in the creatures, such indelible instincts within, and invincible arguments without to keep up this universal consent. The characters are so deep that they cannot possibly be rased out, which would have been one time or other, in one nation or other, had it depended only upon tradition, since one age shakes off frequently the sentiments of the former.

I cannot think of above one which may be called a tradition, which indeed was kept up among all nations, viz. *sacrifices*, which could not be natural but instituted: what ground could they have in nature, to imagine that the blood of beasts could expiate the guilt and wash out the stains of a rational creature? Yet they had in all places (but among the Jews, and some of them only) lost the knowledge of the reason and end of the institution, which the scripture acquaints us was to typify and signify the redemption of man by the promised seed. This tradition hath been laid aside in most parts of the world, while this notion of the existence of a God hath stood firm. But suppose it were a tradition, was it likely to be a mere intention and figment of the first man? Had there been no reason for it, his posterity would soon have found out the weakness of its foundation: what advantage had it been to him to transmit so great a falsehood to kindle the fears, or raise the hopes of his posterity, if there were no God? It cannot be supposed he should be so void of that natural affection, men in all ages bear to their descendants, as so grossly to deceive them, and to be so

contrary to the simplicity and plainness which appears in all things nearest their original.

2. Neither was it by any mutual *intelligence of governors among themselves to keep people in subjection to them.* If it were a political design at first, it seems it met with the general nature of mankind very ready to give it entertainment.

1. It is *unaccountable how this should come to pass.* It must be either by a joint assembly of them, or a mutual correspondence. If by any assembly, who were the persons? Let the name of any one be mentioned. When was the time? Where was the place? By what authority did they meet together? Who made the first motion, and first started this great principle of policy? By what means could they assemble from such distant parts of the world? Human histories are utterly silent in it, and the scripture, the most ancient history, gives an account of the attempt of Babel, but not a word of any design of this nature.

What mutual correspondence could such have, whose interests are for the most part different, and their designs contrary to one another? How could they, who were divided by such vast seas, have this mutual converse? How could those, who were different in their customs and manners, agree so unanimously together in one thing? If there had been such a correspondence between the governors of all nations, what is the reason some nations should be unknown to the world till of late times? How could the business be so secretly managed, as not to take vent, and issue in a discovery to the world? Can reason suppose so many in a joint conspiracy, and no man's conscience in this life, under sharp afflictions, or on his death bed, when conscience is most awakened, constrain him to reveal the cheat that beguiled the world? How came they to be so unanimous in this notion, and to differ in their rites almost in every country? Why could they not agree in one mode of worship throughout all the world, as well as in this universal notion? If there were not a mutual intelligence, it cannot be conceived how in every nation such a state engineer should rise up with the same trick to keep people in awe. What is the reason we cannot find any law in any one nation, to con-

strain men to the belief of the existence of a God, since political stratagems have been often fortified by laws? Besides, such men make use of principles received to effect their contrivances, and are not so impolitic as to build designs upon principles that have no foundation in nature. Some heathen law-givers have pretended converse with their gods to make their laws be received by the people with a greater veneration, and fix with stronger obligation the observance and perpetuity of them; but this was not the introducing of a new principle, but the supposition of an old received notion, that there was a God, and an application of that principle to their present design. The pretence had been vain had not the notion of a God been ingrafted: politicians are so little possessed with a reverence of God, that the first mighty one in the scripture, which may reasonably gain with the atheist the credit of the most ancient history of the world, is represented without any fear of God. *Gen.* 10. 9. An invader and oppressor of his neighbours, and reputed the introducer of a new worship, and being the first that built cities after the flood, as Cain was the first builder of them before the flood, built also idolatry with them. And erected a new worship, and was so far from strengthening that notion the people had of God, that he endeavoured to corrupt it; the first idolatry in common histories being noted to proceed from that part of the world; the most ancient idol being at Babylon, and supposed to be first invented by Nimrod. Whence by the way, perhaps Rome is in the Revelations called Babylon, with respect to that similitude of their saint worship, to the idolatry first set up in that place. * It is evident politicians have often changed the worship of a nation, but it is not upon record, that the first thoughts of an object of worship ever entered into the minds of people by any trick of theirs.

But to return to the present argument, the being of a God is owned by some nations, that have scarce any form of policy among them. It is as wonderful how any

* *Or if we understand it, as some think, that he defended his invasions under a pretext of preserving religion, it assures us that there was a notion of an object of religion before, since no religion can be without an object of worship.*

wit should hit upon such an invention, as it is absurd to ascribe it to any human device, if there were not prevailing arguments to constrain the consent. Besides, how is it possible they should deceive themselves? What is the reason the greatest politicians have their fears of a Deity upon their unjust practices, as well as other men, they intended to befool? How many of them have had forlorn consciences upon a death bed, upon the consideration of a God to answer an account to in another world? Is it credible they should be frighted by that wherewith they knew they beguiled others? No man satisfying his pleasures would impose such a deceit upon himself, or render and make himself more miserable than the creatures he hath dominion over.

2. It is unaccountable *how it should endure so long a time.* That this policy should be so fortunate as to gain ground in the consciences of men, and exercise an empire over them, and meet with such universal success. If the notion of a God were a state-engine, introduced for the ease of government, and preserving people with more felicity in order; how comes it to pass the first broachers of it were never upon record? There is scarce a false opinion vented in the world, but may, as a stream, be traced to the first head and fountain. The inventors of particular forms of worship are known, and the reasons why they prescribed them are known; but who can pitch upon the time and person that sprung up this notion? If any be so insolent as to impose a cheat, he can hardly be supposed to be so successful as to deceive the whole world for many ages. Impostures pass not free through the whole world without examination and discovery; falsities have not been universally and constantly owned without controul and question. If a cheat imposeth upon some towns and countries, he will be found out by the more piercing enquiries of other places; and it is not easy to name any imposture that hath walked so long in its disguise in the world without detection. If this had been a mere trick, there would have been as much craft in some to discern it as there was in others to contrive it. No man can be imagined so wise in a kingdom, but others may be found

as wise as himself: and it is not conceivable, that so many clear sighted men in all ages, should be ignorant of it, and not endeavour to free the world from so great a falsity. It cannot be found that a trick of state should always beguile men of the most piercing insights, as well as the most credulous: that a few crafty men should befool all the wise men in the world; and the world lie in a belief of it, and never like to be freed from it. What is the reason the succeeding politicians never knew this stratagem, since their maxims are usually handed to their successors?

This persuasion of the existence of God, owes not itself to any imposture or subtilty of men: if it had not been agreeable to common nature and reason, it could not so long have borne sway. The imposed yoke would have been cast off by multitudes; men would not have charged themselves with that which was attended with consequences displeasing to the flesh, and hindered them from a full swing of their rebellious passions; such a shackle would have mouldered of itself, or been broke by the extravagances to which human nature is inclined. The wickedness of men without question, hath prompted them to unmask it, if it were a cheat, but could never yet be so successful as to free the world from a persuasion, or their own consciences from the existence of a Deity. It must be therefore of a more ancient date than the craft of statesmen, and descend into the world with the first appearance of human nature. Time, which hath rectified many errors, improves this notion, makes it shock down its roots deeper, and spread its branches larger. It must be a natural truth that shines clear by the detection of those errors that have befooled the world; and the wit of man is never able to name any human author that first insinuated it into the beliefs of men.

3. Nor was it *fear* first introduced it. Fear is the consequent of wickedness. As man was not created with any inherent sin, so he was not created with any terrifying fears, the one had been against the holiness of the Creator, the other against his goodness: fear did not make this opinion, but the opinion of the being of a Deity was

the cause of this fear, after his sense of offending the Deity by his wickedness. The object of fear is before the act of fear; there could not be an act of fear exercised about the Deity till he was believed to be existent, and not only so, but offended: for God, as existent only, is not the object of fear or love; it is not the existence of a thing that excites any of those affections, but the relation a thing bears to us in particular. God is good, and so the object of love, as well as just, and thereby the object of fear. He was as much called *love*, (Ερως) and *men's*, or *mind*, in regard of his goodness and understanding, by the Heathens, as by any other name. Neither of those names were proper to insinuate fear; neither was fear the first principle that made the Heathens worship a god; they offered sacrifices out of gratitude to some, as well as to others out of fear: the fear of evils in the world, and the hopes of belief and assistance from their gods, and not a terrifying fear of God, was the principal spring of their worship. When calamities from the hands of men, or judgments by the influences of heaven were upon them, they implored that which they thought a deity; it was not their fear of him, but a hope in his goodness, and persuasion of remedy from him for averting those evils, that rendered them adorers of a God: if they had not had pre-existent notions of his being and goodness, they would never have made addresses to him, or so frequently sought to that which they only apprehended as a terrifying object. * When you hear men calling upon God in a time of affrighting thunder, you cannot imagine that the fear of thunder did first introduce the notion of a God, but implies, that it was before apprehended by them, or stampt upon them, though their fear doth at present actuate that belief, and engage them in a present exercise of piety: and whereas the scripture saith, *the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom*, or of all religion, it is not understood of a distracted and terrifying fear, but a reverential fear, because of his holiness, or a worship of him, a submission to him, and sincere seeking of him.

* Gassend. Phys. sect. 1. l. 4. c. 2. p. 291, 292.

Then is it not a folly for an Atheist to deny that which is the reason and common sentiment of the whole world, to strip himself of humanity, run counter to his own conscience, prefer a private before a universal judgment, give the lie to his own nature and reason, assert things impossible to be proved, nay impossible to be acted, forge irrationalities for the support of his fancy against the common persuasion of the world, and against himself, and so much of God as is manifest in him and every man?

PART II.

THE FOLLY OF DENYING THAT WHICH ALL THINGS IN THE WORLD PROVE.

All things declare the existence of God—Their production---Illustrated by several propositions—Harmony of all things—One thing subservient to another—All this subserviency centers in man—Is uniform, constant—Diversity of things in the world—Particular creatures pursuing and attaining their ends—Must be actuated by some superior understanding—Their preservation—Constitution of man—The body—The soul—Conscience—Extraordinary occurrences—Judgments—Miracles---Accomplishment of prophecy.

II. IT is a folly to deny that which all creatures, or *all things in the world manifest.* Let us view this in scripture since we acknowledge it, and afterwards consider the arguments from natural reason. The apostle solves it: *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, Rom.* 1. 19, 20. They know or might know, by the things that were made, the eternity and power of God; their sense might take circuit about every object, their minds might collect the being and something of the perfections of the Deity. The first discourse of the mind upon the sight of a delicate piece of workmanship, is the conclusion of the being of an artificer, and the admiration of his skill and industry. The apostle doth not say, the invisible things of God are *be-*

lieved, or they have an opinion of them, but they are *seen* and *clearly seen:* They are like chrystal glasses which give a clear representation of the existence of a Deity, like that mirror reported to be in a temple in Arcadia, which represented to the spectator, not his own face, but the image of that Deity which he worshipped. The whole world is like a looking-glass, which whole and entire represents the image of God, and every broken piece of it, every little shred of a creature doth the like, not only the great ones, elephants and the Leviathan, but ants, flies, and worms. The greater *cattle*, and the *creeping things*, *Gen.* 1. 24. Not naming there any intermediate creature, to direct us to view him in the smaller letters, as well as the greater characters of the world. His name is glorious, and his attributes are excellent *in all the earth*, Psal. 8. 1. in every creature, as the glory of the sun is in every beam and smaller flash; he is seen in every insect, in every spire of grass: The voice of the Creator is in the most contemptible creature. The apostle adds that they are so clearly seen, that men are inexcusable if they have not some knowledge of God by them; if they might not certainly know them, they might have some excuse: so that his existence is not only probably but demonstratively proved from the things of the world.

Especially the heavens declare him, which God *stretches out like a curtain*, Psal. 104. 2. or as some render the word, a *skin*, whereby is signified, that heaven is as an open book, which was anciently made of the skins of beasts, that by the knowledge of them we may be taught the knowledge of God. Where scripture was not revealed, the world served for a witness of a God; whatever arguments the scripture uses to prove it, are drawn from nature, though indeed it doth not so much prove as suppose the existence of a God, but what arguments it uses are from the creatures, and particularly the heavens, which are the public preachers of this doctrine. The breath of God sounds to all the world through those mediums. His being is visible in their existence, his wisdom in their frame, his power in their motion, his good-

ness in their usefulness; *for their voice goeth to the end of the earth*, *Psal.* 19. 1, 2. They have a voice, and their voice is as intelligible as any common language. And those are so plainly the heralds of a Deity, that the heathen mistook them for deities, and gave them a particular adoration which was due to that God they declared. The first idolatry seems to be of those heavenly bodies, which began probably in the time of Nimrod. In Job's time it is certain they admired the glory of the sun, and the brightness of the moon, not without kissing their hands, a sign of adoration, *Job* 31. 26, 27. It is evident a man may as well doubt whether there be a sun when he sees his beams gilding the earth, as doubt whether there be a God. All things in the world declare the existence of a God: In their production, harmony, preservation, and in answering their several ends.

First, In their *production*. The declaration of the existence of God was the chief end for which they were created, that the notion of a supreme and independent eternal Being, might easier incur into the active understanding of man from the objects of sense dispersed in every corner of the world, that he might pay a homage and devotion to the Lord of all, *Isa.* 40. 12, 13, 18, 19. &c. *Have you not understood from the foundation of the earth, tis he that sits upon the circle of the heaven*, &c. How could this great mass be brought into being unless a God had framed it? Every plant, every atom, as well as every star, at the first meeting whispers this in our ears, "*I have a Creator, I am witness to a Deity.*" Who ever saw statues or pictures, but presently thinks of a statuary and limner? Who beholds garments, ships, or houses, but understands there was a weaver, a carpenter, an architect? Who can cast his eyes about the world, but must think of that power that formed it, and that the goodness which appears in the formation of it hath a perfect residence in some being? Those things that are good must flow from something perfectly good; that which is chief in any kind is the cause of all of that kind. Fire, which is most hot, is the cause of all things which are hot. There is some being, therefore, which is the

cause of all that perfection which is in the creature, and this is God; Aquin. 1. qu. 2. Art. 3. All things that are, demonstrate something from whence they are. All things have a contracted perfection, and what they have is communicated to them. Any thing that is imperfect cannot exist of itself. We are led, therefore, by them to consider a fountain from which all perfection issues; a hand which distributes those several degrees of being and perfection to what we see; we see that which is imperfect, our minds conclude something perfect to exist before it; our eye sees the streams, but our understanding rises to the fountain head; as the eye sees the shadow, but the understanding informs us whether it be the shadow of a man or of a beast.

God hath given us sense to behold the objects in the world, the understanding to reason his existence from them; the understanding cannot conceive a thing to have made itself; that is against all reason. As they are made they speak a Maker; and cannot be a trick of chance, since they are made with such an immense wisdom, that is too vast for the grasp of all human understanding. Those that doubt whether the existence of God be an implanted principle, yet agree that the effects in the world lead to a supreme and universal cause; and that if we have not the knowledge of it rooted in our natures, yet we have it by discourse, since by all masters of reason a *processus in infinitum* must be accounted impossible in subordinate causes. This will appear in several propositions. And,

I. The world and every creature had *a beginning*. The scripture ascertains this to us. David, who was not the first man, gives the praise to God of his being curiously wrought, &c. *Psal.* 139. 14, 15. God gave being to men, and plants, and beasts, before they gave being to one another. He gives being to them now as the fountain of all being, though the several modes of being are from the several natures of second causes. It is true indeed we are ascertained that they were made by the true God, that they were made by his word; *By faith we under-*

stand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, &c. *Heb.* 11. 3. that they were made of nothing, and not only this lower world wherein we live, but according to the Jewish division, the world of men, the world of stars, and the world of spirits, and of souls: we do not waver in it, or doubt of it, as the heathen did in their disputes; we know they are the workmanship of the true God, of that God we adore, by his word, without any instrument or engine, as in earthly structures; of things which do not appear, without any pre-existent matter, as all artificial works of men are framed. Yet the proof of the beginning of the world is affirmed with good reason; and if it had a beginning, it had also some higher cause than itself. Every effect hath a cause. The world was not eternal, or *from eternity.* The matter of the world cannot be eternal. Matter cannot subsist without form, nor put on any form without the action of some cause, this cause must be in being before it acted; that which is not cannot act. The cause of the world must necessarily exist before any matter was endued with any form; that therefore cannot be eternal before which another did subsist; if it were from eternity it would not be subject to mutation. If the whole was from eternity why not also the parts? What makes the changes so visible then, if eternity would exempt it from mutability?

Time cannot be infinite, and therefore the world not eternal. All motion hath its beginning; if it were otherwise, we must say the number of heavenly revolutions of days and nights which are past to this instant, is actually infinite, which cannot be in nature. If it were so, it must needs be granted, that a part is equal to the whole; because infinite being equal to infinite, the number of days past in all ages to the beginning of one year being infinite, as they would be, supposing the world had no beginning, would by consequence be equal to the number of days which shall pass to the end of the next; whereas that number of days past is indeed but a part, and so a part would be equal to the whole.

Generations of men, animals, and plants could not be

from eternity. If any man say the world was from eternity, then there must be propagations of living creatures in the same manner as at this day; for without this the world could not consist; what we see now done must have been perpetually done, if it be done by a necessity of nature: but we see nothing now arise but by mutual propagation. If the world were eternal, therefore it must be so in all eternity. Take any particular species: suppose a man, if men were from eternity, then there were perpetual generations, some were born into the world and some died. Now the natural condition of generation is, that a man doth not generate a man, nor a sheep a lamb, as soon as ever itself is brought into the world, but gets strength and vigour by degrees, and must arrive to a certain stated age before they can produce the like; for whilst any thing is little and below the due age, it cannot increase its kind. Men therefore, and other creatures, propagated their kind, by the same law, not as soon as ever they were born, but in the interval of some time, and children grew up by degrees in the mother's womb till they were fit to be brought forth. If this be so, then there could not be an eternal succession of propagating; for there is no eternal continuation of time; time is always to be conceived as having one part before another; but that perpetuity of nativities is always after some time, wherein it could not be for the weakness of age. If no man then can conceive a propagation from eternity, there must be then a beginning of generation in time, and consequently the creatures were made in time. * "If the world were eternal, it must have been in the same posture as it is now, in a state of generation and corruption; and so corruption must have been as eternal as generation, and then things that generate and corrupt, must have eternally been, and eternally not have been: there must be some first way to set generation on work." We must lose ourselves in our conceptions; we cannot conceive a father before a child, as well as we cannot conceive a child before a father. Reason is quite bewil-

* Wolseley on Atheism, p. 47.

dered, and cannot return into a right way of conception till it conceive one first of every kind; one first man, one first animal, one first plant, from whence others proceed. The argument is unanswerable, and the wisest atheist, if any atheist can be called wise, cannot unloose the knot. We must come to something that is first in every kind, and this first must have a cause, not of the same kind, but infinite and independent, otherwise men run into inconceivable labyrinths and contradictions. Man, the noblest creature upon earth, hath a beginning. No man in the world but was some years ago no man. If every man we see had a beginning; then the first man had also a beginning; then the world had a beginning; for the earth which was made for the use of man, had wanted that end for which it was made. We must pitch upon some one man that was unborn, that first man must either be eternal, or must spring out of the earth, as plants and trees do. He was therefore made; and whatsoever is made hath some cause that made it, which is God. If the world were uncreated, it were then immutable; but every creature upon the earth is always changing. If things be mutable, they were created; if created, they were made by some author: whatsoever hath a beginning must have a maker, if the world hath a beginning, there was then a time when it was not; it must have some cause to produce it. That which makes is before that which is made, and this is God.

II. Proposition. No creature can *make itself:* The world could not make itself. If every man had a beginning, every man then was once nothing; he could not then make himself, because nothing cannot be the cause of something, *Psal.* 100. 3. *The Lord he is God, he hath made us, and not we ourselves:* whatsoever began in time, was not; and when it was nothing, it had nothing, and could do nothing: and therefore it could never give being to itself or to any other. For then it gave what it had not, and did what it could not. * Since reason must acknowledge a first of every kind, a first man, &c. it must acknowledge him created and made, not by him-

* Petav. Theol. Deg. Tom. 1. lib. 1. cap. 2. p. 14.

self. Why have not other men since risen up by themselves? not by chance; why hath not chance produced the like in that long time the world hath stood? If we never knew any thing give being to itself, how can we imagine any thing ever could? If the chiefest part of this lower world cannot, nor any part of it hath been known to give being to itself, then the whole cannot be supposed to give any being to itself: man did not form himself: his body is not from himself, it would then have the power of moving itself, but that is not able to live or act without the presence of the soul: whilst the soul is present the body moves, when that is absent the body lies as a senseless log, not having the least action or motion. His soul could not form itself, can that which cannot form the least mote, the least grain of dust, form itself, a nobler substance than any upon the earth? This will be evident to every man's reason, if we consider,

1. Nothing can *act before it be.* The first man was not, and therefore could not make himself to be: for any thing to produce itself is to act; if it acted before it was, it was then something and nothing at the same time; it had then a being before it had a being; it acted when it brought itself into being. How could it act without a being, without it was? So that if it were the cause of itself, it must be before itself as well as after itself; it was before it was; it was as a cause before it was an effect. Action always supposes a principle from whence it flows; as nothing hath no existence, so it hath no operation; there must be therefore something of real existence to give a being to those things that are, and every cause must be an effect of some other before it be a cause: to be and not be at the same time, is a manifest contradiction, which would be, if any thing made itself: that which makes is always before that which is made: who will say the house is before the architect, or the picture before the painter. The world as a creator, must be before itself as a creature.

2. That which doth not *understand itself, and order itself,* could not make itself. If the first man fully understood his own nature, the excellency of his own soul, the

manner of its operations, why was not that understanding conveyed to his posterity? Are not many of them found, who understand their own nature, almost as little as a beast understands itself; or a rose understands its own sweetness; or a tulip its own colours? The scriptures indeed give us an account how this came about, viz. by the deplorable rebellion of man, whereby death was brought upon them, a spiritual death, which includes ignorance as well as an inability to spiritual action. *Gen.* 2. 17. *Psal.* 49. 8. Thus he fell from his honour and became like the beasts that perish, and not retaining God in his knowledge, retained not himself in his own knowledge.—But what reply can an atheist make to it, who acknowledges no higher cause than nature? If the soul made itself, how comes it to be so wanting in its knowledge of itself, and of other things? If the soul made its own understanding, whence did the defect arise? If some first principle was settled by the first man in himself, where was the stop that he did not implant all in his own mind, and consequently in the minds of all his descendants? Our souls know little of themselves, little of the world, are every day upon new enquiries, have little satisfaction or stability in themselves, and when they seem to come to some resolution, stagger again, and like a stone rolled up to the top of the hill, quickly find themselves again at the foot. How come they to be so purblind in truth? So short of that which they judge true goodness? How comes it to pass they cannot order their own rebellious affections, and suffer the reins they have to hold over their affections to be taken out of their hands by the unruly fancy and flesh? This no man, that denies the being of a God, and revelation, can give an account of. Blessed be God that we have the scripture, which gives us an account of these things, that all the wit of men could never inform us of; and that, when they are discovered and known by revelation, they appear not contrary to reason.

3. If the first man made himself, *how came he to limit himself?* If he gave himself being, why did he not give himself all the perfections and ornaments of being? No-

thing that made itself could sit down contented with a little, but would have had as much power to give itself that which is less, as to give itself being, when it was nothing. The excellencies it wanted had not been more difficult to gain, than the other which it possessed, as belonging to its nature. If the first man had been independent upon another, and had his perfection from himself, he might have acquired that perfection he wanted, as well as have bestowed upon himself that perfection he had; and then there would have been no bounds set to him. He would have been *omniscient* and *immutable*. He might have given himself what he would; if he had the setting of his own bounds, he would have set none at all; for what should restrain him? No man now wants ambition to be what he is not; and if the first man had not been determined by another, but had given himself being, he would not have remained in that determinate being, no more than a toad would remain a toad, if it had power to make itself a man, and that power it would have had, if it had given itself a being. Whatsoever gives itself being, would give itself all degrees of being, and so would have no imperfection, because every imperfection is a want of some degree of being. * He that could give himself matter and life, might give himself every thing. The giving of life is an act of omnipotence, and what is omnipotent in one thing, may be in all. Besides, if the first man had made himself, he would have conveyed himself to all his posterity in the same manner, every man would have had all the perfections of the first man, as every creature hath the perfections of the same kind, from whence it naturally issues, all are desirous to communicate what they can to their posterity. Communicative goodness belongs to every nature. Every plant propagates its kind in the same perfection it hath itself; and the nearer any thing comes to a rational nature, the greater affection it hath to that which descends from it; therefore this affection belongs to a rational nature much

* Therefore the heathens called God τὸ ὄν the only being: other things were not beings, because they had not all degrees of being.

more. The first man therefore, if he had had power to give himself being, and consequently all perfection, he would have had as much power to convey it down to his posterity; no impediment could have stopt his way; then all souls proceeding from that first man would have been equally intellectual. What should hinder them from inheriting the same perfections? whence should they have divers qualifications and differences in their understandings? No man then would have been subject to those weaknesses, doubtings, and unsatisfied desires of knowledge and perfection. But as all souls are not alike, it is certain they depend upon some other cause for the communication of that excellency they have. If the perfections of man be so contracted and kept within certain bounds, it is certain that they were not in his own power, and so were not from himself. Whatsoever hath a determinate being must be limited by some superior cause. There is therefore some superior power, that hath thus determined the creature by set distinct bounds, and hath assigned to every one its proper nature, that it should not be greater or less than it is; who hath said of every one as of the waves of the sea, *hitherto shalt thou come, but no further;* and this is God. Man could not have reserved any perfection from his posterity. For since he doth propagate not by choice but nature, he could no more have kept back any perfection from them, than he could, as he pleased, have given any perfection belonging to his nature to them.

4. That which hath power to give itself being, *cannot want power to preserve that being.* Preservation is not more difficult than creation. If the first man had made himself, why did he not preserve himself? He is not now among the living in the world. How came he to be so feeble as to sink into the grave? Why did he not inspire himself with new heat and moisture, and fill his languishing limbs and declining body with new strength? Why did he not chase away diseases and death at the first approach? What creature can find the dust of the first man? All his posterity traverse the stage and retire again; in a short space their age departs, and is *removed*

from them *as a shepherd's tent*, and is *cut off with pining sickness. Isa.* 38. 12. The life of man is as a wind, and like a cloud that is consumed and vanishes away. *The eye that sees him shall see him no more, he returns not to his house, neither doth his place know him any more. Job* 7. 6, 7, 8, 9, The scripture gives us the reason of this, and lays it upon the score of sin against his Creator; which no man without revelation can give any satisfactory account of. Had the first man made himself, he had been sufficient for himself, able to support himself without the assistance of any creature. He would not have needed animals, and plants, and other helps to nourish and refresh him, nor medicines to cure him. He could not be beholden to other things for his support, which he is certain he never made for himself. His own nature would have continued that vigour, which once he had conferred upon himself. He would not have needed the heat and light of the sun; he would have wanted nothing sufficient for himself in himself; he needed not have sought without himself for his own preservation and comfort. What depends upon another is not of itself, and what depends upon things inferior to itself is less of itself. Since nothing can subsist of itself, since we see those things upon which man depends for his nourishment and subsistence, growing and decaying, starting into the world and retiring from it, as well as man himself; some preserving cause must be inferred upon which all depends.

5. If the first man did produce himself, *why did he not produce himself before?* It hath been already proved, that he had a beginning, and could not be from eternity. Why then did he not make himself before? Not because he would not. For having no being, he could have no will; he could neither be willing nor not willing. If he could not then, how could he afterwards? If it were in his own power he could have done it, he would have done it; if it were not in his own power, then it was in the power of some other cause, and that is God. How came he by that power to produce himself? If the the power of producing himself were com-

municated by another, then man could not be the cause of himself. That is the cause of it which communicated that power to it. But if the power of being was in and from himself and in no other, nor communicated to him, man would always have been in act, and always have existed; no hinderance can be conceived. For that which had the power of being in itself was invincible to any thing that should stand in the way of its own being. We may conclude from hence, the excellency of the scripture; that it is a word not to be refused credit. It gives us the most rational account of things in the 1st and 2d of Genesis, which nothing in the world else is able to do.

III. Proposition. No creature *could make the world*, no creature can create another. If it creates of nothing, it is then omnipotent and so not a creature. If it makes something of matter unfit for that which is produced out of it, then the inquiry will be, who was the cause of the matter? and so we must arrive to some uncreated being, the cause of all. Whatsoever gives being to any other must be the highest being, and must possess all the perfections of that to which it gives being; what visible creature is there which possesses the perfections of the whole world? If therefore an invisible creature made the world, the same enquiries will return whence that creature had its being? For he could not make himself. If any creature did create the world, he must do it by the strength and virtue of another, which first gave him being; and this is God. For whatsoever hath its existence and virtue of acting from another, is not God; if it hath, it is then a second cause, and so supposeth a first cause. It must have some cause of itself, or be eternally existent. If eternally existent, it is not a second cause, but God; if not eternally existent, we must come to something at length which was the cause of it, or else be bewildered without being able to give an account of any thing. We must come at last to an infinite, eternal, independent Being, that was the first cause of this structure and fabric wherein we and all creatures dwell.

The scripture proclaims this aloud. *Isa.* 45. 6. 7. *I am the Lord and there is none else: I form the light and I create darkness.* Man, the noblest creature, cannot of himself make a man, the chiefest part of the world. If our parents only without a superior power made our bodies or souls, they would know the frame of them; as he that makes a lock knows the wards of it: he that makes any curious piece of arras, knows how he sets the various colours together, and how many threads went to each division in the web; he that makes a watch, having the idea of the whole work in his mind, knows the motions of it, and the reason of those motions. But both parents and children are equally ignorant of the nature of their souls and bodies, and of the reason of their motions. God only that had the supreme hand in forming us, in whose *book all our members are written, which in continuance were fashioned,* knows what we all are ignorant of. If man hath in an ordinary course of generation his being chiefly from an higher cause than his parents, the world then certainly had its being from some infinitely wise intelligent being, which is God. If it were, as some fancy, made by an assembly of atoms, there must be some infinite intelligent cause that made them, some cause that separated them, some cause that mingled them together for forming so comely a structure as the world. It is the most absurd thing to think they should meet together by hazard, and rank themselves as we see, without a higher and infinitely wise agent. So that no creature could make the world. For supposing any creature was formed before this visible world, and might have a hand in disposing things, yet he must have a cause of himself, and must act by the virtue and strength of another; and this is God.

IV. Proposition. From hence it follows, that there is *a first cause* of things, which we call God. There must be something supreme in the order of nature, something which is greater than all, which has nothing beyond it or above it; otherwise we must run in infinitum. We see not a river but we conclude a fountain; a watch but we conclude an artificer. As all number

begins from unity, so all the multitude of things in the world begins from some unity, as the principle of it. It is natural to arise from a view of those things, to the conception of a nature more perfect than any. As from heat mixed with cold, and light mixed with darkness, men conceive an intense heat and a pure light: And from a corporeal or bodily substance joined with an incorporeal, as man is an earthly body, and a spiritual soul, we ascend to a conception of a substance purely incorporeal and spiritual. So from a multitude of things in the world, reason leads us to one choice being above all. And since in all natures in the world, we still find a superior nature; the nature of one beast, above the nature of another; the nature of man above the nature of beasts; and some invisible nature, the worker of strange effects in the air and earth, which cannot be ascribed to any visible cause, we must suppose some nature above all those of unconceivable perfection.

* Every sceptic, one that doubts whether there be any thing real or no in the world, that counts every thing an appearance, must necessarily own a first cause. They cannot reasonably doubt but that there is some first cause, which makes things appear so to them. They cannot be the cause of their own appearance. For as nothing can have a being from itself, so nothing can appear by itself and its own force. Nothing can be and not be, at the same time. But that which is not, and yet seems to be; if it be the cause why it seems to be what it is not, it may be said to be and not to be. But certainly such persons must think themselves to exist. If they do not, they cannot think; and if they do exist, they must have some cause of that existence. So that which way soever we turn ourselves, we must in reason own a first cause of the world. Well then might the Psalmist term an atheist a *fool*, that disowns a God, against his own reason. Without owning a God as the first cause of the world, no man can give any tolerable or satisfactory account of the world to his own reason.

* Coccei sum. Theol. cap. 8. § 33, &c.

And this first cause, must *necessarily* exist. *It is necessary that he by whom all things are, should be before all things, and nothing before him. And if nothing be before him, he comes not from any other; and then he always was, and without beginning. He is from himself; not that he once was not, but because he hath not his existence from another, and therefore of necessity he did exist from eternity. Nothing can make itself, or bring itself into being; therefore there must be some being which hath no cause, that depends upon no other, never was produced by any other, but was what he is from eternity, and cannot be otherwise; and is not what he is by will, but nature necessarily existing, and always existing without any capacity or possibility ever not to be. 2. This first cause must be *infinitely perfect.* Since man knows he is an imperfect being, he must suppose the perfections he wants are seated in some other being, which hath limited him, and upon which he depends. Whatsoever we conceive of excellency or perfection must be in God. For we can conceive no perfection but what God hath given us a power to conceive. And he that gave us a power to conceive a transcendent perfection above whatsoever we saw or heard of, hath much more in himself; or else he could not give us such a conception.

Secondly. As the production of the world, so *the harmony of all the parts of it declare the being and wisdom of a God.* Without the acknowledging God, the Atheist can give no account of those things. The multitude, elegance, variety, and beauty of all things are steps whereby to ascend to one fountain and original of them. Is it not a folly to deny the being of a wise agent, who sparkles in the beauty and motions of the heavens; rides upon the wings of the wind, and is written upon the flowers and fruits of plants. As the cause is known by the effects, so the wisdom of the cause is known by the elegance of the work, and the proportion of the parts to one another. Who can imagine the world could

* Petav. Theol. Dog. Tom. 1. lib. 1. cap. 2. pa. 10, 11.

be rashly made, and without consultation, which in every part of it is so wonderfully framed? † No work of art springs up of its own accord. The world is framed by an excellent art, and therefore made by some skilful artist. As we hear not a melodious instrument, but we conclude there is a musician that touches it, as well as some skilful hand that framed and disposed it for those lessons. And no man that hears the pleasant sound of a lute but will fix his thoughts not upon the instrument itself, but upon the skill of the artist that made it, and the art of the musician that strikes it, though he should not see the first, when he saw the lute, nor sees the other, when he hears the harmony. So a rational creature confines not his thoughts to his sense, when he sees the sun in its glory, and the moon in its brightness; but riseth up in contemplation and admiration of that infinite spirit that made them what they are. This appears,

First. In *uniting contrary* qualities together. All things are compounded of the elements, and they are endued with contrary qualities, dryness and moisture, heat and cold. These would always be contending with, and infesting one another's rights, till the contest ended in the destruction of one or both. Where fire is predominant, it would dry up the water; where water is prevalent, it would quench the fire. The heat would wholly expel the cold, or the cold overpower the heat. Yet we see them united in every body upon the earth, and rendering mutual offices for the benefit of that body wherein they are seated, and all conspiring together for the public interest of the body. How could those contraries, that of themselves observe no order, that are always preying upon one another, jointly accord together of themselves, for one common end, if they were not linked into a common band, and reduced to that order by some incomprehensible wisdom and power, which keeps a hand upon them, orders their motions, directs their events, and makes them friendly pass into one another's nature? Confusion had been the result of the diversity of their natures. No

† Philo. Judæ. Petav. Theol. Dogmat. Tom. 1. lib. 1. cap. 1. pag. 9.

body could have been formed of those conflicting qualities, nor any harmony arise from so many jarring strings, if they had not been reduced to concord by one that is supreme Lord over them, and knows how to dispose their varities and enmities for the public good. * If a man should see a large city or country consisting of great multitudes of men of different tempers, full of frauds, and factions and animosities in their natures against one another, yet living together in good order and peace, without oppressing and invading one another, and joining together for the public good; he would presently conclude, there were some excellent governor, who tempered them by his wisdom, and preserved the public peace, though he had never yet beheld him with his eye. It is as necessary to conclude a God, who moderates the contrarieties in the world; as to conclude a wise prince, who over-rules the contrary dispositions in a state, making every one to keep his own bounds and confines.

† *Secondly.* In the *subserviency* of one thing to another. All the members of living creatures are curiously fitted for the service of one another, destined to a particular end, and endued with virtue to attain that end, and so distinctly placed, that one is no hinderance to the other in its operations. Is not this more admirable than to be the work of chance, which is inincapable to settle such an order and fix particular and general ends, causing an exact correspondence of all the parts with one another, and every part to conspire together for one common end? One thing is fitted for another. The eye is fitted for the sun, and the sun for the eye. Several sorts of food are fitted for several creatures, and those creatures with organs for the partaking of that food.

1. Subserviency of *heavenly bodies.* ‡ The sun, the heart of the world, is not for itself but for the good of the world, as the heart of man is for the good of the body. How conveniently is the sun placed, at a distance from the earth,

* Athanasius Petav. Theol. Dog. Tom. 1. li. 1. cap. 1. p. 4, 5.
† Gassend. Physic. sect. 1. lib. 4. cap. 2. p. 215.
‡ Lessius.

and the upper heavens to enliven the stars above and enliven the earth below? If it were either higher or lower, one part would want its influences. It is not in the higher parts of the heavens; the earth then which lives and fructifies by its influence would have been exposed to perpetual winter and chillness, unable to have produced any thing for the sustenance of man or beast. If seated lower, the earth had been parched up, the world made uninhabitable, and long since had been consumed to ashes by the strength of its heat. Consider the motion as well as the situation of the sun. Had it stood still, one part of the world had been cherished by its beams, and the other left in disconsolate darkness. Besides, the earth would have had no shelter from its perpendicular beams striking perpetually and without remission upon it. And what consequences would have followed had it been stationary, as well as upon its too great nearness. By constant day the beauty of the stars had been obscured, the knowledge of their motions been prevented, and a considerable part of the glorious wisdom of the Creator in those choice *works of his fingers* had been veiled from our eyes. It moves in a fixed line, visits all parts of the earth, scatters in the day its refreshing blessings through the earth, and removes the mask from the other beauties of heaven in the night. It spreads its light, warms the earth, cherisheth the seeds, excites the spirit in the earth, and brings its fruits to maturity. View also the the air, the vast extent between heaven and earth, which serves for a water-course, a cistern for water, to bedew the face of the sun-burnt earth, to satisfy the desolate ground, and to cause the *bud of the tender herb to spring forth.* Could chance appoint the clouds of the air to interpose as fans before the scorching heat of the sun, and the faint bodies of the creatures? Can that be the *father of the rain, or beget the drops of dew?* Could any thing so blind settle those ordinances of heaven for the preservation of creatures on the earth? Can this either bring or stay the bottles of heaven, when the *dust grows into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together?*

2. The subserviency of the lower world, *the earth and*

sea, which was created to be inhabited, *Isa.* 45. 18. The sea affords water to the rivers, the rivers like so many veins are spread through the whole body of the earth to refresh and enable it to bring forth fruit for the sustenance of man and beast, *Psal.* 104. 10, 11, *He sends the springs into the vallies, which run among the hills they give drink to every beast of the field, the wild asses quench their thirst. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and the herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth*, v. 14. The trees are provided for shades against the extremity of heat, a refuge for the panting beasts, an habitation for birds wherein to make their nests, and a basket for their provision. How are the vallies and mountains of the earth disposed for the pleasure and profit of man? Every year are the fields covered with harvests, for nourishing the creatures, no part is barren but beneficial to man. The mountains that are not cloathed with grass for his food are set with stones to make him an habitation; and they have their metals and minerals for the conveniency, and comfort, and benefit of man. Things which are not fit for his food are medicines for his cure under some painful sickness. Where the earth brings not forth corn, it brings forth roots, for the service of other creatures. Wood abounds more in those countries where the cold is stronger than in others. Can this be the result of chance, or not rather of an infinite wisdom?

Consider the usefulness of the sea, for the supply of rivers to refresh the earth, which *go up by the mountains and down by the vallies unto the place God hath founded for them*, *Psal.* 104. 8. A store-house for fish for the nourishment of other creatures, of medicines for cure, and of pearls for ornament. The band that ties remote nations together, by giving opportunity of passage to, and commerce with one another. How should that natural inclination of the sea to cover the earth submit to this subserviency to the creatures? Who hath pounded in this fluid mass of water in certain limits, and confined it to its own channel, for the accom-

modation of such creatures, who by its common law can only be upon the earth? Naturally the earth was covered with the deep as with a garment, the waters stood above the mountains, and who set a bound that they might not pass over, that they return not again to cover the earth? *Psal.* 104. 6, 9. Was it blind chance, or infinite power, that *shut up the sea with doors, and made thick darkness a swaddling band for it, and said hitherto shall thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. Job.* 38. 8. 9. All things are so ordered that they are not *propter se* but *propter aliud.* What advantage accrues to the sun by its unwearied rolling about the world? Doth it increase the perfection of its nature by all its circuits? No, but it serves the inferior world, it impregnates things by its heat. Not the most abject thing, but hath its end and use. There is a strait connexion, the earth could not bring forth fruit without the heavens, the heavens could not water the earth without vapours from it.

3. All this subserviency of creatures *centers in man.* Other creatures are served by those things as well as ourselves, and they are provided for their nourishment and refreshment as well as ours; yet both they, and all creatures meet in man as lines in their centers. Things that have no life or sense are made for those that have, and those that have life and sense are made for those that are endued with reason. When the Psalmist admiringly considers the heavens, sun, moon, and stars, he intimates that man is the end for which they were created, *Psal.* 8. 3, 4. *What is man that thou art mindful of him?* He expresseth more particularly the dominion that man hath *over the beasts of the fields, the fowl of the air, and whatsoever passes through the paths of the sea,* ver. 6. 7, 8, and concludes from thence the *excellency of God's name in all the earth.* All things in the world one way or other center in an usefulness for man, some to feed him, some to clothe him, some to delight him, others to instruct him, some to exercise his wit, and others his strength. Since man did not make them, he did not also order them

for his own use. If they conspire to serve him who never made them, they direct man to acknowledge another, who is the joint Creator both of the Lord, and the servants under his dominion. And therefore as the inferior natures are ordered by an invisible hand for the good of man; so the nature of man is by the same hand ordered to acknowledge the existence and the glory of the Creator. This visible order man knows he did not constitute, he did not settle those creatures in subserviency to himself; they were placed in that order before he had any existence himself, *Job* 38. 4. *Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth, declare if thou hast understanding?* All is ordered for man's use, the heavens answer to the earth as a roof to a floor; both composing a delightful habitation for man; vapours ascend from the earth, and the heavens concoct them, and return them back in welcome showers for the supplying of the earth. *Jer.* 10. 13. The light of the sun descends to beautify the earth, and employs its heat to mature its fruits; and though all creatures have distinct natures, and must act for particular ends, according to the law of their creation; yet there is a joint combination for the good of the whole, as the common end; just as all the rivers in the world, from what part soever they come, fall into the sea for the supply of that mass of waters, which loudly proclaims some infinitely wise nature, *who made* those things in so exact an harmony. * As in a clock, the hammer which strikes the bell, leads us to the next wheel, that to another, the little wheel to a greater, whence it derives its motion, this at last to the spring, which acquaints us that there was some artist that framed them in this subordination to one another for this orderly motion.

4. This order or subserviency is *regular and uniform.* Every thing is determined to its peculiar nature. The sun and moon make day and night, months and years, determine the seasons, never are defective in coming back to their station and place, they wander not from

* Morn. de Verit. cap. 1. p. 7.

their roads, nor hinder one another in the functions assigned them. From a small grain or seed a tree springs, with body, root, bark, leaves, fruit of the same shape, figure, smell, taste; that there should be as many parts in one as in all of the same kind, and no more, and that in the womb of a sensitive creature, should be formed one of the same kind, with all the due members and no more, and the creature that produceth it knows not how it is formed, or how it is perfected. If we say this is nature, this nature is an intelligent being; if not, how can it direct all causes to such uniform ends. If it be intelligent, this nature must be the same we call God, *Who ordered every herb to yield seed, and every fruit-tree to yield fruit after its kind, and also every beast and every creeping thing after its kind, Gen.* 1, 12. 24. And every thing is determined to its particular season. The sap riseth from the root at its appointed time, enlivening and clothing the branches with a new garment at the time of the sun's returning, not wholly hindered by any accidental coldness of the weather, it being often colder at its return, than it was at the sun's departure. All things have their seasons of budding, blossoming, bringing forth fruit; they ripen in their seasons, cast their leaves at the same time; throw off their old clothes, and in the spring appear with new garments, but still in the same fashion. * The winds and the rain have their seasons, and seem to be administered by laws for the profit of man: no satisfactory cause of those things can be ascribed to the earth, the sea, to the air or stars. *Can any understand the spreading of his clouds or the noise of his tabernacle? Job* 38. 29. The natural reason of those things cannot be demonstrated without recourse to an infinite and intelligent Being.

This regularity in plants and animals is universal. The heavens have the same motion in all parts of the world; all men have the same law of nature in their minds; all creatures are stamped with the same law of creation: in all parts the same creatures serve for the same use; and

* Coccei sum. Theol. cap. 8. § 77.

though there be different creatures in different parts of the world, yet they have the same subordination, the same subserviency to one another, and ultimately to man; which shews that there is a God, who tunes all those different strings to the same notes in all places. Is it nature merely that conducts these natural causes in due measures to their proper effects, without interfering with one another? Can mere nature be the cause of those musical proportions of time? You may as well conceive a lute to sound its own strings without the hand of an artist; a city well governed without a governor; as imagine so exact an order, without an orderer. Would any man, when he hears a clock strike the hour of the day, imagine this regularity in it, without the direction of one that had understanding to manage it? He would not only regard the motion of the clock, but commend the diligence of the keeper.

5. This order and subserviency is *constant*. Children change the customs and manners of their fathers; magistrates change the laws they have received from their ancestors, and enact new ones in their room: but in the world all things consist as they were created at the beginning; the law of nature in the creatures hath met with no change. Who can behold the sun rising in the morning; the moon shining in the night; increasing and decreasing in its due spaces; the stars in their regular motions night after night, for all ages, and yet deny a President over them? And this motion of the heavenly bodies, being contrary to the nature of other creatures, who move in order to rest; must be from some higher cause. But those ever since the settling in their places, have been perpetually rounding the world. * What nature, but one powerful and intelligent, could give that perpetual motion to the sun, which being bigger than the earth, runs many thousand miles in the space of an hour, with an unwearied diligence, performing its daily task, and as a strong man, rejoicing to run its race, for above five thousand

* Whether it be the sun or the earth that moves, it is all one: Whence have either of them this constant and uniform motion?

years together, without intermission. It is not nature's sun, but God's sun, which he *makes to rise upon the just and unjust.* So a plant receives its nourishment from the earth, sends forth its juice to every branch, forms a bud which spreads it into a blossom and flower, the leaves of this drop off, and leave a fruit of the same colour and taste, every year; which being ripened by the sun leaves seeds behind it for the propagation of its like, which contains in the nature of it, the same kind of buds, blossoms, and fruit which were before, and being nourished in the earth, and quickened by the power of the sun, discovers itself at length, in all the progresses and motions which its predecessor did. Thus in all ages, in all places, every year it performs the same task, spins out fruit of the same colour, taste, virtue, to refresh the several creatures for which they are provided. This settled state of things comes from that God who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should *not be removed for ever;* and set *ordinances for them* to act by a stated law; according to which they move as if they understood themselves to have made a covenant with their Creator. *Job* 38. 33. *Jer.* 33. 20.

THIRDLY. Add to this union of contrary qualities, and the subserviency of one thing to another, the admirable *variety and diversity* of things in the world. What variety of metals, living creatures, plants; what variety and distinction in the shape of their leaves, flowers, smell? Who can number up the several sorts of beasts on the earth, birds in the air, fish in the sea? How various are their motions? Some creep, some go, some fly, some swim; and in all this variety each creature hath organs or members, fitted for their peculiar motion. If you consider the multitude of stars, which shine like jewels in the heavens, their different magnitudes; or the variety of colours in the flowers and tapestry of the earth, you could no more conclude they made themselves, or were made by chance, than you can imagine a piece of arras, with a diversity of figures and colours, either wove itself, or were knit together by chance.

How delicious is the sap of the vine, when turned into

wine, above that of a crab? Both have the same womb of earth to conceive them, both agree in the nature of wood and twigs, as channels to convey it into fruit: what is that which makes the one so sweet, the other so sour, or makes that sweet, which was a few weeks before unpleasantly sharp? is it the earth? no: they both have the same soil; the branches may touch each other; the strings of their roots may, under ground, entwine about one another. Is it the sun? both have the same beams: Why is not the taste and colour of the one as gratifying as the other? Is it the root? the taste of that is far different from that of the fruit it bears. Why do they not, when they have the same soil, the same sun, and stand near one another, borrow something from one another's natures? No reason can be rendered, but that there is a God of infinite wisdom hath determined this variety, and bound up the nature of each creature within itself!* Every thing follows the law of its creation, and it is worthy observation, that the Creator of them hath not given that power to animals, which arise from different species, to propagate the like to themselves; as mules that arise from different species: No reason can be assigned for this, but the fixed determination of the Creator, that those species which were created by him should not be lost in those mixtures, which are contrary to the law of the creation! This cannot possibly be ascribed to that which is commonly called nature, but unto the God of nature, who will not have his creatures exceed their bounds or come short of them.

Now since among those varieties, there are some things better than others, yet all are *good* in their kind, and partake of goodness, there must be something better, and more excellent than all those, from whom they derive that goodness, which inheres in their nature and is communicated by them to others. And this excellent being must inherit in an eminent way, the goodness of all those varieties, since they made not themselves, but were made by another. All that goodness which is scattered in those

* Amirald. de Trinitate pa. 21.

varieties must be infinitely concentred in that nature, which distributed those various perfections to them, *Psal.* 94. 9. *He that planted the ear shall not he hear? he that formed the eye shall not he see? he that teacheth man knowledge shall not he know?* The Creator is greater than the creature, and whatsoever is in his effects, is but an impression of some excellency in himself; there is therefore some chief fountain of goodness, from whence all the various goodness in the world flows.

From all this it follows, if there be an order, and harmony, there must be an orderer, one that *made the earth by his power, established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion, Jer.* 10. 12. Order being the effect, cannot be the cause of itself. Order is the disposition of things to an end, and is not intelligent, but implies an intelligent orderer; and therefore it is as certain that there is a God, as it is certain there is order in the world. Order is an effect of reason and counsel; this reason and counsel must have its residence in some being, before this order was fixed. The things ordered are always distinct from that reason and counsel whereby they are ordered, and also after it, as the effect is after the cause. No man begins a piece of work, but he hath the model of it in his own mind; no man builds a house, or makes a watch, but he hath the idea or copy of it in his own head. This beautiful world bespeaks an idea of it, or a model; since there is such magnificent wisdom in the make of each creature, and the proportion of one creature to another, this model must be before the world, as the pattern is always before the thing that is wrought by it. This, therefore, must be in some intelligent and wise agent, and this is God. Since the reason of those things exceed the reason and all the art of man, who can ascribe them to any inferior cause? Chance it could not be; the motions of chance are not constant, and at seasons, as the motions of creatures are. That which is by chance is contingent, this is necessary: uniformity can never be the birth of chance. Who can imagine that all the parts of a watch can meet together, and put themselves in order and motion by

chance? * "Nor can it be nature only, which indeed is a disposition of second causes. If nature hath not an understanding, it cannot work such effects; if nature therefore uses counsel to begin a thing, reason to dispose it, art to effect it, virtue to complete it, and power to govern it, why should it be called nature rather than God?" Nothing is so sure as that which hath an end to which it tends, and a cause by which it is ordered to that end. Since therefore all things are ordered in subserviency to the good of man, they are so ordered by him that made both man and them; and man must acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of his Creator, and act in subserviency to his glory, as other creatures act in subserviency to his good. Sensible objects were not made only to gratify the sense of man, but to hand something to his mind as he is a rational creature; to discover God to him as an object to be loved, and desired, and enjoyed. If this be not the effect of it, the order of the creature, as to such an one, is in vain and falls short of its true end."

To conclude; as when a man comes into a palace, built according to the exactest rule of art, and with an unexceptionable conveniency for the inhabitants, he would acknowledge both the being and skill of the builder; so whosoever shall observe the disposition of all the parts of the world, their connexion, and comeliness, the variety of seasons, the swarms of different creatures, and the mutual offices they render to one another cannot conclude less, than that it was contrived by an infinite skill, effected by infinite power, and governed by infinite wisdom. None can imagine a ship to be orderly conducted without a pilot; nor the parts of the world to perform their several functions without a wise guide; as the members of the body, cannot perform theirs, without the active presence of the soul. The atheist then is a *fool*, to deny that which every creature in his constitution asserts, and thereby renders himself unable to give a satisfactory account of that constant uniformity in the motions of the creatures.

* Lactant.

THIRDLY. As the production and harmony of all things, so *particular creatures*, pursuing and attaining their ends, manifest that there is a God. All particular creatures have natural instincts, which move them for some end: the intending of an end, is a property of a rational creature; since the lower creatures cannot challenge that title, they must act by the understanding and direction of another; and since man cannot challenge the honour of inspiring the creatures with such instincts, it must be ascribed to some nature infinitely above any creature in understanding. No creature determines itself. Why do the fruits and grain of the earth nourish us, when the earth which instrumentally gives them that fitness cannot nourish us, but because their several ends are determined by one higher than the world?

1. Several creatures have *several natures.* Observe how all creatures, as soon as they see the light, move to that whereby they must live, and make use of the natural strength God hath given them for their defence, before they are grown to any maturity to afford them that defence? The Scripture makes the appetite of infants to their milk a foundation of the divine glory, *Psal.* 8, 3. *Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, hast thou ordained strength;* that is, matter of praise and acknowledgment of God, in the natural appetite they have to their milk, and their relish of it. All creatures have a natural affection to their young ones; all young ones, by a natural instinct, move to, and receive their proper nourishment. Some are their own physicians as well as their own caterers, and naturally discern what preserves them in life, and what restores them when sick. The swallow flies to its celendine, and the toad hastens to its plantain. Can we behold the spider's nets, or the silkworm's web, the bee's closets, or the ant's granaries, without acknowledging a higher being than a creature, who hath planted that genius in them? The natural instincts of the goat, the ostrich, the horse, and the eagle, &c. are commended to the consideration of Job, to persuade him to the acknowledgment and admiration of God, and humiliation of himself.

The spider, as if it understood the art of weaving, fits its web both for its own habitation, and a net to catch its prey. The bee builds a cell which serves for chambers to reside in, and a repository for its provision. Birds are observed to build their nests with a clammy matter without, for the firmer duration of it, and with a soft moss and down within, for the conveniency and warmth of their young: *The stork knows his appointed time;* and the swallows observe the time of their coming; they go and return according to the seasons of the year. This they gain not by consideration, it descends to them with their nature; they neither gain nor increase it by rational deductions. It is not in vain to speak of these. How little do we improve by meditation, those objects which daily offer themselves to our view, so full of instruction? Our Saviour sends his disciples to behold the providential care of God in the lilies of the fields. It is observed that the creatures offensive to man go single: if they went by troops they would bring destruction upon man and beast. This is the nature given them for the preservation of others.

2. *They know not their end.* They have a law in their natures, but have no rational understanding, either of the end to which they are appointed, or the means fit to attain it; they naturally do what they do, and move by no counsel of their own, but by a law impressed by some higher hand upon their natures. What plant knows why it strikes its root into the earth? Does it understand what storms it is to contest with, or why it shoots up its branches towards heaven? Does it know it needs the droppings of the clouds to preserve itself, and make it fruitful? These are acts of understanding. The root is downwards to preserve its own standing, the branches are upwards to preserve and benefit other creatures. This understanding is not in the creature itself, but originally in another. Thunders and tempests know not why they are sent, yet by the direction of a mighty hand they are instruments of justice upon a wicked world. * Rational

* Coccei. sum. Theolog. cap. 8. § 67. &c

creatures that act for some end, and know the end they aim at, yet know not the manner of the natural motion of the members to it. When we intend to look upon a thing, we take no counsel about the natural motion of our eyes, we know not all the principles of their operations; or how that dull matter whereof our bodies are composed, is subject to the order of our minds. * We are not of counsel with our stomachs about the concoction of our meat, or the distribution of the nourishing juice to the several parts of the body. We know no more than a plant knows what stature it is of, or the medicinal virtue of its fruit; yet all those natural operations are perfectly directed to their proper end, by an higher wisdom than any human understanding is able to conceive, since they exceed the ability of an inanimate or fleshly nature, yea and all the wisdom of man. Do we not often see reasonable creatures acting for one end, and perfecting a higher than what they aimed at, or could suspect? When Joseph's brethren sold him for a slave, their end was to be rid of an informer; but the action issued in preparing him to be the preserver of them and their families. The design of Cyrus was to be a conqueror, but God had decreed that he should be the deliverer of his people. *Prov.* 16. 9. *A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directs his steps.*

3. Therefore there is *some superior understanding and nature* which so actuates them. That which acts for an end unknown to itself, depends upon some over-ruling wisdom that knows that end. Who should direct them in all those ends, but he that bestowed a being upon them for those ends,† who knows what is convenient for their life, their security, and the propagation of their natures? An exact knowledge is necessary, both of what is agreeable to them, and the means whereby they must attain it; which, since it is not inherent in them, is in that wise God, who puts those instincts into them, and governs them in the exercise of them to such ends. Any man

* Peirson on the Creed, p. 35.

† Lessius de Providen. lib. 1. p. 652.

that sees a dart flung, knows it cannot hit the mark without the skill and strength of an archer. Or he that sees the hand of a dial pointing to the hours successively, knows that the dial is ignorant of its own end, and is disposed and directed in that motion by another. All creatures ignorant of their own natures could not universally in the whole kind, and in every climate and country, without any difference in the whole world, tend to a certain end, if some over-ruling wisdom did not preside over the world and guide them. And if the creatures have a conductor, they have a Creator. All things are turned round *about by his council, that they may do whatsoever he commands them upon the face of the world in the earth, Job*, 37. 12.

So that in this respect the folly of atheism appears. Without the owning a God no account can be given of those actions of creatures, that are an imitation of reason. To say the bees, &c. are rational, is to equal them to man; nay make them his superiors, since they do more by nature than the wisest man can do by art. It is their own counsel whereby they act, or another's; if it be their own, they are reasonable creatures; if by another's it is not mere nature that is necessary: then other creatures would not be without the same skill; there would be no difference among them. If nature be restrained by another, it hath a superior; if not it is a free agent: it is an understanding Being that directs them: and then it is something superior to all creatures in the world; and by this therefore we may ascend to the acknowledgment of the necessity of a God.

Fourthly. Add to the production and order of the world and the creatures acting for their end, *the preservation of them.* Nothing can depend upon itself in its preservation, no more than it could in its being. If the order of the world was not fixed by itself, the preservation of that order cannot be continued by itself.

Though the matter of the world after creation, cannot return to that nothing from whence it was produced, without the power of God that made it, because the same power is as requisite to reduce a thing to nothing

as to raise it from nothing, yet without the actual exertion of a power that made the creatures, they would fall into confusion. Those contesting qualities, which are in every part of it, could not have preserved, but would have consumed, and extinguished one another, and reduced the world to that confused chaos, wherein it was before the spirit moved upon the waters. As contrary parts could not have met together in one form, unless there had been one that had conjoined them: so they could not have kept together after their conjunction, unless the same hand had preserved them. Natural contrarieties cannot be reconciled. It is as great power to keep discords united, as at first to unite them. Who would doubt, but that an army made up of several nations and opposite humours, would fall into a civil war, if they were not under the management of some wise general; or a ship dash against the rocks, withou the skill of a pilot. as the body hath neither life nor motion, without the active presence of the soul, which distributes to every part the virtue of acting, sets every one in the exercise of its proper function, and resides in every part; so there is some powerful cause which does the like in the world, that rules and tempers it. When we consider that we are preserved, and know that we could not preserve ourselves; we must necessarily run to some first cause which preserves us. All works of art depend upon nature, and are preserved while they are kept by the force of nature: As a statue depends upon the matter whereof it is made, whether stone or brass; this nature therefore must have some superior by whose influx it is preserved. Since therefore we see a firm order in the things of the world, that they conspire together for the good and beauty of the universe; that they depend upon one another; there must be some principle upon which they do depend; something to which the first link of the chain is fastened, which himself depends upon no superior, but wholly rests in his own essence and being. It is the title of God to be the *preserver of man and beast.* The Psalmist elegantly describeth it. *Psal.* 104. 24. &c.

The earth is full of his riches, all wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season; when he *opens his hand* he *fills them with good; when he hides his face they are troubled, if he take away their breath they die and return to dust; he sends forth his spirit, and they are created, and renews the face of the earth; the glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, and the Lord shall rejoice in his works. Psa.* 36. 6. 104. 24. &c. Upon the consideration of all which the Psalmist, v. 34. takes a pleasure in the meditation of God, as the cause and manager of all things; which issues in joy and praise. And why should not the consideration of the power and wisdom of God in the creatures, produce the same effect in our hearts, if he be our God? Or as some render it, *my meditation shall be sweet*, or acceptable to him, whereby I find matter of praise in the things of the world, and offer it to the Creator of it.

Thirdly, III. Reason, it is a folly *to deny that which a man's own nature witnesseth* to *him.* The whole frame of the body and soul bears the impress of the infinite power and wisdom of the Creator. A body framed with an admirable architecture, a soul endowed with understanding, will, judgment, memory, imagination. Man is the epitome of the world, contains in himself the substance of all natures, and the fulness of the whole universe; not only in regard of the universality of his knowledge, whereby he comprehends the reasons of many things; but as all the perfections of the several natures of the world are gathered and united in man, for the perfection of his own, in a smaller volume. In his soul he partakes of heaven, in his body of the earth. There is the life of plants, the sense of beasts, and the intellectual nature of angels.* *The Lord breathed into his nostril the breath of life, and man,* &c. חיים *of lives.* Not one sort of *lives*, but several; not only an animal, but a rational life; a soul of a nobler extract and nature, than what was given to other creatures. So that we need not cast our eyes

* Gen. 2. 7.

any further than ourselves, to behold a God. He shines in the capacity of our souls and the vigour of our members. We must fly from ourselves and be stripped of our own humanity, before we can put off the notion of a deity. He that is ignorant of the existence of God, must be possessed with so much folly, as to be ignorant of his own make and frame.

First, *In the parts whereof he consists*, body and soul.

I. Take a prospect of the *body*. The Psalmist counts it a matter of praise and admiration, *Psal.* 139. 15. 16. *I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; when I was made in secret and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, in thy book all my members were written.* The scheme of man and every member was drawn in his book. All the sinews, veins, arteries, bones, like a piece of embroidery or tapestry, were wrought by God, as it were with deliberation; as an artificer that draws out the model of what he is to do in writing, and sets it before him when he begins his work. And indeed the *fabric* of man's body, as well as his soul, is an argument for a divinity. The artificial structure of it, the elegance of every part, the proper situation of them, their proportion one to another, the fitness for their several functions, drew from Galen, * a heathen, a confession of the admirable wisdom and power of the Creator, and that none but God could frame it.

1. The *order, fitness, and usefulness of every part;* the whole model of the body is grounded upon reason. Every member hath its exact proportion, distinct office, regular motion. Every part hath a particular comeliness, and convenient temperament bestowed upon it, according to its place in the body. The heart is hot to enliven the whole. The eye clear to take in objects and to present them to the soul: Every member is fitted for its peculiar service and action. Some are for sense, some for motion, some for preparing, and others for dispensing nourishment to the several parts. They mutually depend

* Lib. 3. de Usu Partium. Petav. Theol. Dog. tom. 1. lib. 1. cap. 1. p. 6.

upon, and serve one another. What small strings unite the particular members together! *As the earth that hangs upon nothing!* Take but one part away, and you either destroy the whole, or stamp upon it some mark of deformity. All are knit together by an admirable symmetry; all orderly perform their functions by settled law; none swerving from their rule, but in case of some predominant humour; and none of so great a multitude of parts, stifled in so little a room, or justling against one another, to hinder their mutual actions, none can be better disposed. And the greatest wisdom of man could not imagine it, till his eyes present him with the sight and connexion of one part and member with another.

The *heart.* * How strongly it is guarded with ribs like a wall, that it might not be easily hurt! It draws blood from the liver, through a channel made for that purpose; rarifies it and makes it fit to pass through the arteries and veins, and to carry heat and life to every part of the body; and by a perpetual motion it sucks in the blood and spouts it out again; which motion depends not upon the command of the soul, but is pure natural. The *mouth*, takes in the meat, the teeth grind it for the stomach, the stomach prepares it, nature strains it through the milky veins, the liver refines it and mints it into blood, separates the purer from the drossy parts, which go to the heart, circulate through the whole body, running through the veins like rivers through so many channels of the world, for the watering of the several parts; which are framed of a thin skin for straining the blood, for the supply of the members of the body, and framed with several valves or doors, for the thrusting the blood forwards to perform its circular motion. The *brain*, fortified by a strong skull to hinder outward accidents, a tough membrane or skin to hinder any oppression by the skull; the seat of sense; that which coins the animal spirits by purifying and refining those which are sent to it, and seems like a curious piece of needlework. The *ear*, framed with windings and turnings, to

* Theod. de Providentiâ. Orat. 3.

keep any thing from entering to offend the brain; so disposed as to admit sounds with the greatest safety and delight; * filled with an air within, by the motion whereof the sound is transmitted to the brain; as sounds are made in the air by diffusing themselves, as you see circles made in the water by the flinging in of a stone; this is the gate of knowledge, whereby we hear the oracles of God and receive the instruction of men for arts. It is by this they are exposed to the mind, and the mind of another man framed in our understandings. What a curious workmanship is that of the *eye*, which is in the body, as the sun in the world; set in the head as in a watch-tower, having the softest nerves for receiving the greater multitude of spirits necessary for the act of vision? How is it provided with defence by a variety of coats to secure and accommodate the little humour and part whereby the vision is made? Made of a round figure and convex, as most commodious to receive the species of objects; shaded by the eye-brows and eye-lids, secured by the eye-lids which are its ornament and safety; which refresh it when it is too much dried by heat; hinder too much light from insinuating itself into it; cleanse it from impurities, by their quick motion; preserve it from any invasion; and by contraction confer to the more evident discerning of things. And both the eyes are seated in the hollow of the bone for security; yet standing out, that things may be perceived more easily on both sides: This little member can behold the earth; and in a moment view things as high as Heaven.

† The *tongue* for speech framed like a musical instrument; the *teeth* serving for variety of sounds; the *lungs* serving for bellows to blow the organs as it were, to cool the heart; by a continual motion transmitting a pure air to the heart, expelling that which was superfluous. It is by the tongue that communication of truth hath a passage among men; it opens the sense of the mind; there would

* Eccles. 12. 4.

† Coccei. sum. Theolog. cap. 8. § 49.

be no converse and commerce without it. Speech among all nations hath an elegance and attractive force, mastering the affections of men. Not to speak of other parts, or of the multitude of spirits that actuate every part; the quick flight of them where there is a necessity of their presence. *Solomon*, in the 12 *Ecclesiast.* makes an elegant description of them in his speech of old age: and *Job* speaks of this formation of the body, *Job* 10. 9, 10, 11, &c. Not the least part of the body is made in vain. The hairs of the head have their use, as well as are an ornament. Every member bears the signature of God's wisdom. He is visible in the formation, and beauty, and vigour of the whole frame. This structure could not be from the body, that only hath a passive power, and cannot act in the absence of the soul; nor can it be from the soul. How comes it then to be so ignorant of the manner of its formation? The soul knows not the internal parts of its own body, but by information from others, or inspection into other bodies. It knows less of the inward frame of the body than it does of itself: but he that makes the clock can tell the number and motions of the wheels within, as well as what figures are without.

This short discourse is useful to raise our admirations of the wisdom of God, as well as to demonstrate, that there is an infinite wise Creator; and the consideration of what we are and the wisdom of God displayed in our frame, would maintain religion much in the world; since all are so framed that no man can tell any error in the constitution of his nature. If thus the body of man is fitted for the service of his soul by an infinite God, the body ought to be ordered for the service of this God, and in obedience to him.

2. The admirable *difference of the features of men* is a great argument that the world was made by a wise being. This could not be wrought by chance or be the work of mere nature, since we never or very rarely find two persons exactly alike. This distinction is a part of infinite wisdom; otherwise what confusion would be introduced into the world? Without this, parents could not know their children, nor children

their parents, nor a brother his sister, nor a subject his magistrate. Without it there had been no comfort of relations, no government, no commerce; debtors would not have been known from strangers, good men could not have been known from bad; property could not have been preserved, nor justice executed; and the innocent might have been apprehended for the guilty, wickedness could not have been stopped by any law. The faces of men are the same for parts, not for *features*. A dissimilitude in a likeness. Man is like to all the rest in the world, yet unlike to any, and is distinguished by some mark from all, which is not to be observed in any other species of creatures. This speaks some wise agent which framed man; since for the preservation of human society and order in the world, this distinction was necessary.

II. As man's own nature witnesses a God in the structure of his body, so also in the nature of his *Soul*. * We know that we have an understanding, a substance we cannot see, but we know it by its operations; as thinking, reasoning, willing, remembering; and as operating about things invisible and remote from sense. This must needs be distinct from the body, for that being but dust and earth in its origin, hath not the power of reasoning, and thinking; for then it would have that power, when the soul were absent, as well as when it is present. Besides, if it had that power, it could think only of those things which are sensible and made up of matter, as itself is. This soul hath a greater excellency, it can know itself, rejoice in itself, which other creatures in this world are not capable of. The soul is the greatest glory of this lower world, and as one saith; † there seems to be no more difference between the soul and an angel, than between a sword in the scabbard and when it is out of the scabbard.

1. Consider the *vastness of its capacity*. The under-

* Cocceii. Sum. Theolog. cap. 8. § 50. 51.

† More.

standing can conceive the whole world, and paint in itself the invisible pictures of all things. It is capable of apprehending and discoursing of things superior to its own nature. It is suited to all objects, as the eye to all colours, or the ear to all sounds.* How great is the memory to retain such varieties, such diversities? The will also can accommodate other things to itself. It invents arts for the use of man; prescribes rules for the government of states; ransacks the bowels of nature; makes endless conclusions, and steps in reasoning from one thing to another, for the knowledge of truth; it can contemplate and form notions of things higher than the world.

2. The *quickness of its motions.* Nothing is more quick in the whole course of nature; the sun runs through the world in a day, this can do it in a moment. It can with one flight of fancy ascend the battlements of heaven.† The mists of the air that hinder the sight of the eye, cannot hinder the flights of the soul; it can pass in a moment from one end of the world to the other, and think of things a thousand miles distant. It can think of some mean thing in the world, and presently in the twinkling of an eye, mount up as high as heaven. As its desires are not bounded by sensual objects, so neither are the motions of it restrained by them. It will break forth with the greatest vigour, and conceive things infinitely above it; though it be in the body, it acts as if it were ashamed to be cloistered in it. This could not be the result of any material cause: Whoever knew mere matter understand, think, will? And what it hath not, it cannot give. That which is destitute of reason and will, could never confer reason and will. ‡ It is not the effect of the body, for the body is fitted with members to be subject to it. It is in part ruled by the activity of the soul, and in part by the counsel of the soul; it is used by the soul and knows not how it is used. Nor could it be from

* Culverwel.
† Theodoret.
‡ Coccei. Sum. Theolog. cap. 8. § 51. 52.

the parents, since the souls of the children often transcend those of the parents in vivacity, acuteness, and comprehensiveness. One man is stupid and begets a son with a capacious understanding; one is debauched and beastly in morals, and begets a son who from his infancy testifies some virtuous inclinations, which sprout forth in delightful fruit with the ripeness of his age. Whence should this difference arise, a fool begat the wise man, a debauched man be the parent of the virtuous? the wisdom of the one could not descend from the foolish soul of the other; nor the virtues of the son from the deformed and polluted soul of the parent; it lies not in the organs of the body; for if the folly of the parent proceeded not from their souls, but the ill disposition of the organs of their bodies, how comes it to pass that the bodies of the children are better organized beyond the goodness of their immediate cause? We must recur to some invisible hand, that makes the difference, who bestows upon one at his pleasure richer qualities than upon another: You can see nothing in the world endowed with some excellent quality, but you must imagine some bountiful hand enriched it with that dowry. None can be so foolish as to think that a vessel ever enriched itself with the liquor wherewith it is filled; or that any thing worse than the soul should endow it with that knowledge and activity which sparkles in it. Nature could not produce it: That nature is intelligent, or not; if it be not, then it produces an effect more excellent than itself, in as much as an understanding being surmounts a being that hath no understanding. If the supreme cause of the soul be intelligent, why do we not call it God as well as nature? We must arise from hence to the notion of a God; a spiritual nature cannot proceed but from a spirit higher than itself, and of a transcendent perfection above itself. If we believe we have souls, and understand the state of our own faculties, we must be assured that there was some invisible hand which bestowed those faculties and the riches of them upon us; a man must be ignorant of himself before he can be ignorant of the existence of God. By considering the nature of our souls, we

may as well be assured that there is a God, as that there is a sun by the shining of his beams. And indeed the soul is a representation of God, as the landscape of a country or map represents all the parts of it, but in a far less proportion than the country itself. The soul fills the body, and God the world; the soul sustains the body, and God the world; the soul sees, but is not seen; God sees all things, but is himself invisible. How base are they then that prostitute their souls, an image of God, to base things inexpressibly below their own nature?

3. I might add the union of soul and body. Man is a kind of compound of angel and beast, of soul and body; if he were only a soul he were a kind of angel; if only a body, he were another kind of brute. Now that a body as vile and dull as earth, and a soul that can mount up to heaven, and rove about the world with so quick a motion, should be so closely united; that so noble a being as the soul should be an inhabitant in such a tabernacle of clay, must be ascribed to some infinite power.

4. Man witnesseth to a God in the *operations and reflections of conscience*, *Rom.* 2. 15. *Their thoughts are accusing or excusing.* An inward comfort attends good actions, and an inward torment follows bad ones; for there is in every man's conscience fear of punishment and hope of reward; there is therefore a sense of some superior judge, which hath the power both of rewarding and punishing. If man were his own supreme rule, what need he fear punishment, since no man would inflict any evil or torment on himself; nor can any man be said to reward himself, for all rewards refer to another, to whom the action is pleasing, and is a conferring some good a man had not before. If an action be done by a subject or servant, with hopes of reward, it cannot be imagined that he expects a reward from himself, but from the prince or person whom he eyes in that action, and for whose sake he does it.

1. There is a law in the minds of men, which is a *rule of good and evil.* There is a notion of good and evil in the consciences of men, which is evident by those laws which are common in all countries, for the preserving

human societies, the encouragement of virtue, and discouragement of vice: What standard should they have for those laws, but a common reason? The design of those laws was to keep men within the bounds of goodness, for mutual commerce; whence the Apostle calls the heathen magistrate a *minister of God for good*, *Rom.* 13. 4. and *the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law*, *Rom.* 2. 14. Man in the first instant of the use of reason, finds natural principles within himself, directing and choosing them; he finds a distinction between good and evil; how could this be, if there were not some rule in him to try and distinguish good and evil? If there were not such a law and rule in man, he could not sin; for where there is no law there is no transgression. If man were a law to himself, and his own will his law, there could be no such thing as evil; whatsoever he willed would be good and agreeable to the law; and no action could be accounted sinful; the worst act would be as commendable as the best. Every thing at man's appointment would be good or evil. If there were no such law, how should men that are naturally inclined to evil, disapprove of that which is unlovely, and approve of that good which they practice not. There is no man but inwardly thinks well of that which is good, while he neglects it; and ill of that which is evil, while he commits it. Those that are vicious, praise those that practice the contrary virtues. Those that are evil would seem to be good, and those that are blameworthy, will yet rebuke evil in others. This is really to distinguish between good and evil; whence does this arise, by what rule do we measure this, but by some innate principle?

And this is universal, the same in one man as in another, the same in one nation as in another; they are born with every man, and inseparable from his nature, *Prov.* 27. 19. *As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man.* Common reason supposeth, that there is some hand which hath fixed this distinction in man: how could it else be universally impressed? No law can be without a law-giver; no sparks but must be kindled by some other. Whence should this law then derive its ori-

ginal? Not from man; he would fain blot it out, and cannot alter it when he pleases; natural generation never intended it; it is settled therefore by some higher hand, which, as it imprinted it so it maintains it against the violences of men; who, were it not for this law, would make the world more than it is, an *Aceldema*, a field of blood. For had there not been some supreme good, the measure of all other goodness in the world, we could not have had such a thing as good. The scripture gives us an account that this good was distinguished from evil before man fell, they were *objecta scibilia;* good was commanded and evil prohibited, and did not depend upon man. From this a man may rationally be instructed that there is a God, for he may thus argue: I find myself naturally obliged to do this thing and avoid that, I have therefore a superior that doth oblige me: I find something within me that directs me to such actions, contrary to my sensitive appetite, there must be something above me therefore that put this principle into man's nature; if there were no superior, I should be the supreme judge of good and evil; were I the lord of that law which binds me, I should find no contradiction within myself between reason and appetite.

2. From the transgression of this law of nature, *fears do arise in the consciences of men.* Have we not known or heard of men struck by so deep a dart, that could not be drawn out by the strength of men, or appeased by the pleasure of the world, and men crying out with horror upon a death-bed of their past life, when *their fear hath come as a desolation, and destruction as a whirlwind, Prov.* 1. 27. And often in some sharp affliction, the dust hath been blown off from men's consciences, which for a while hath obscured the writing of the law. If men stand in awe of punishment, there is then some superior to whom they are accountable; if there were no God, there were no punishment to fear. What reason of any fear, upon the dissolution of the knot between the soul and body, if there were not a God to punish, and the soul remained not in being to be punished? How *suddenly* will conscience work upon the appearance of an af-

fliction, rouse itself from sleep like an armed man, and fly in a man's face before he is aware of it? It will *surprise the hypocrites*, *Isa.* 38. 14. It will bring to mind actions committed long ago, and set them in order before the face, as God's deputy acting by his authority and omniscience. As God hath not left *himself without a witness* among the creatures, *Acts* 14. 17; so he hath not left himself without a witness in a man's own breast.

1. This operation of conscience hath been *universal.* No nation hath been any more exempt from it, than from reason. There is not a man but hath one time or other more or less smarted under the sting of it. All over the world conscience hath shot its darts; it hath torn the hearts of princes in the midst of their pleasures; it hath not flattered them whom most men flatter, nor feared to disturb their rest, whom no man dares to provoke. Judges have trembled on a tribunal, when innocents have rejoiced in their condemnation. The iron bars upon Pharaoh's conscience were at last broken, and he was forced to acknowledge the justice of God in all that he did, *Exod.* 9. 27. *I have sinned, the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.* Had they been like childish frights at the apprehension of bug-bears, why hath not reason shaken them off? But on the contrary, the stronger reason grows, the smarter those lashes are: Groundless fears had been short lived; age and judgment would have worn them off, but they grow sharper with the growth of persons. The scripture informs us they have been of as ancient a date as the revolt of the first man, *Gen.* 3. 10. *I was afraid*, saith Adam, *because I was naked;* which was an expectation of the judgment of God. All his posterity inherit his fears, when God expresseth himself in any tokens of his majesty and providence in the world. Every man's conscience testifies that he is unlike what he ought to be, according to that law engraven upon his heart. In some, indeed, conscience may be seared; or suppose some men may be devoid of conscience, shall it be denied to be a thing belonging to the nature of man? Some men have not their eyes, yet the power of seeing the light is natural to man, and belongs to the integrity

of the body. Who would argue, that because some men are mad, and have lost their reason by a distemper of the brain, that therefore reason hath no reality, and is but an imaginary thing? But I think it is a standing truth, that every man hath been under the scourge of it one time or other, in a less or greater degree; for since every man is an offender, it cannot be imagined, conscience, which is natural to man, and an active faculty, should always lie idle, without doing this part of its office? The Apostle tells us of the thoughts *accusing or excusing one another*, according as the actions were. Nor is this truth weakened by the corruptions in the world, whereby many have thought themselves bound in conscience to adhere to a false and superstitious worship and idolatry, as much as any have thought themselves bound to adhere to a worship commanded by God. This very thing infers that all men have a reflecting principle in them; it is no argument against the being of conscience, but only infers that it may err in the application of what it naturally owns. We can no more say, that because some men walk by a false rule, there is no such thing as conscience, than we can say that because men have errors in their minds, therefore they have no such faculty as an understanding; or because men will that which is evil, they have no such faculty as a will in them.

2. These operations of conscience, are *when the wickedness is most secret.* These tormenting fears of vengeance, have been frequent in men, who have had no reason to fear man, since their wickedness being unknown to any but themselves, they could have no accuser but themselves. They have been in many acts which their companions have justified them in: Persons above the stroke of human laws, yea such as the people have honoured as gods, have been haunted by them. Conscience hath not been frightened by the power of princes, or bribed by the pleasures of courts. David was pursued by his horrors, when he was by reason of his dignity above the punishment of the law, or at least was not reached by the law; since though the murder of Uriah was intended by him, it was not acted by him. Such ex-

amples are frequent in human records. When the crime hath been above any punishment by man, they have had an accuser, judge, and executioner in their own breasts; and can this be originally from a man's self? He who loves and cherishes himself, would fly from any thing that disturbs him; it is a greater power and majesty from whom man cannot hide himself, that holds him in those fetters. What should affect their minds for that which can never bring them shame or punishment in this world, if there were not some supreme Judge, to whom they were to give an account, whose instrument conscience is? Doth it do this of itself; hath it received an authority from the man himself to sting him? No, it must be some supreme power that directs and commissions it against our wills.

3. These operations of conscience *cannot be totally shaken off* by man. If there be no God, why do not men silence the clamours of their consciences, and scatter those fears that disturb their rest and pleasures? How inquisitive are men after some remedy against those convulsions? Sometimes they would render the charge insignificant and promise themselves rest, though they *walk in the wickedness of their own hearts.* * How often do men attempt to drown it by sensual pleasures, and perhaps overpower it for a time; but it revives, reinforces itself, and acts revenge for its former stop. It holds sin to a man's view, and fixes his eyes upon it, whether he will or no. *The wicked are like a troubled sea, and cannot rest, Isa. 57. 20.* They would wallow in sin without controul, but this inward principle will not suffer it; nothing can shelter men from the smitings of conscience. What is the reason it could never be cried down? Man is an enemy to his own disquiet; what man would continue upon the rack, if it were in his power to deliver himself? Why have all human remedies been without success; and not able to extinguish those operations, though all the wickedness of the heart hath been ready to assist and second the attempt? It hath pursued men notwithstanding all the violence used against it, and renewed its

* Deut. 29. 19.

scourges with more severity, as men deal with their resisting slaves. Man can as little silence those thunders in his soul, as he can the thunders in the heavens: He must strip himself of his humanity before he can be stripped of an accusing and affrighting conscience; It sticks as close to him as his nature. Since man cannot throw out the process it makes against him, it is an evidence that some higher power secures its throne and standing; for who should put this scourge into the hand of conscience, which no man in the world is able to wrest out?

4. We may add, the *comfortable reflections of conscience.* There are excusing as well as accusing reflections of conscience, when things are done as works of the *law of nature, Rom.* 2. 15. As it doth not forbear to accuse and torture, when wickedness though unknown to others is committed; so when a man hath done well, though he be attacked with all the calumnies the wit of man can forge, yet his conscience justifies the action, and fills him with a singular contentment. As there is torture in sinning, so there is peace and joy in well doing: Neither of those it could do, if it did not understand a sovereign judge, who punishes the rebels and rewards the well doer. Conscience is the foundation of all religion; and the two pillars upon which it is built, are the being of God and the bounty of God to those that *diligently seek him.* *

This proves the existence of God. If there were no God, conscience were useless; the operations of it would have no foundation, if there were not an eye to take notice, and a hand to punish or reward the action. The accusations of conscience evidence the omniscience and the *holiness* of God; the terrors of conscience, the *justice* of God; the approbations of conscience, the *goodness* of God: All the order in the world owes itself, next to the providence of God, to conscience; without it the world would be a *Golgotha.* As the creatures witness there was a first cause that produced them, so this principle in man evidences itself to be set by the same hand,

* Heb. 11. 6.

for the good of that which it had so framed. There could be no conscience if there were no God, and man could not be a rational creature, if there were no conscience. As there is a rule in us, there must be a judge whether our actions be according to the rule. And since conscience in our corrupted state is in some particular misled, there must be a power superior to conscience to judge how it hath behaved itself, in its deputed office; we must come to some supreme judge, who can judge conscience itself. As a man can have no surer evidence, that he is a being, than because he is a *thinking* being: so there is no surer evidence in nature, that there is a God, than that every man hath a natural principle in him, which continually cites him before God, and puts him in mind of him, and makes him one way or other fear him, and reflect upon him whether he will or no: A man hath less power over his conscience, than over any other faculty: He may choose whether he will exercise his understanding about, or move his will to such an object, but he hath no such authority over his conscience; he cannot limit it, or cause it to cease from acting and reflecting; and therefore both that and the law about which it acts, are settled by some supreme authority in the mind of man, and this is God.

Fourthly, IV. The evidence of a God results from the *vastness of desires in man*, and the real dissatisfaction he hath in every thing below himself. Man hath a boundless appetite after some sovereign good. As his understanding is more capacious than any thing below, so is his appetite larger. This affection of desire exceeds all other affections. Love is determined to something known. Fear to something apprehended; but desire approaches nearer to infinity, and pursues, not only what we know, or what we have a glimpse of, but what we find wanting in what we already enjoy. That which the desire of man is most naturally carried after, is *good*, some fully satisfying good. We desire knowledge by the sole impulse of reason; but we desire good before the excitement of reason, and the desire is always after good, but not always after knowledge. Now the soul of man finds

imperfection in every thing here, and cannot attain to perfect satisfaction and felicity. In the highest fruitions of worldly things, it is still pursuing something else, which speaks a defect in what it already hath. The world may afford felicity for the body, but not for the inhabitant in it; it is too mean for that. Is there any one soul, among the sons of men, that can, upon due enquiry, say it was at rest and wanted no more, that hath not sometimes had desires after an immaterial good? The soul *follows hard* after such a thing, and hath frequent looks after it, *Psal.* 63. 8. Man desires a stable good, but no sublunary thing is so: And he that doth not desire such a good, wants the rational nature of a man: This is as natural as understanding, will, and conscience: Whence should the soul of man have those desires? How came it to understand that something is still wanting to make its nature more perfect; if there were not in it some notion of a more perfect being, which can give it rest?

Can such a capacity be supposed to be in it without something in being able to satisfy it? If so, the noblest creature in the world is most miserable, and in a worse condition than any other. Other creatures obtain their ultimate desires, *they are filled with good*, *Psal.* 104. 28. And shall man only have a vast desire without any possibility of enjoyment? Nothing in man is in vain; he hath objects for his affections, as well as affections for objects. Every member of his body hath its end, and doth attain it. Every affection of his soul hath an object, and that in this world, and shall there be none for his desire, which comes nearest to infinite of any affection planted in him? This boundless desire had not its original from man himself: nothing would render itself restless; something above the bounds of this world implanted those desires after a higher good, and made him restless in every thing else. And since the soul can only rest in that which is infinite, there is something infinite for it to rest in: since nothing in the world, though a man had the whole, can give it satisfaction, there is something above the world only capable to do it, otherwise the soul would be always

without it, and be more in vain than any other creature. There is therefore some infinite being that can only give contentment to the soul, and this is GOD. And that goodness which implanted such desires in the soul, would not do it to no purpose, and mock it in giving it an infinite desire to satisfaction, without intending it the pleasure of enjoyment, if it doth not by its own folly deprive itself of it. The felicity of human nature must needs exceed that which is allotted to other creatures.

4. And last reason. As it is a folly to deny that which all nations in the world have consented to, which the frame of the world evidences, which man in his body, and soul, and the operations of conscience witnesses to: so it is folly to deny the being of God, which is witnessed by *extraordinary occurrences in the world.*

1. In extraordinary *judgments.* When a just revenge follows abominable crimes, especially when the judgment is suited to the sin, by a strange concatenation and succession of providences, methodized to bring such a particular punishment; when the sin of a nation or person is made legible in the inflicted judgment, which testifies that it cannot be a casual thing. The scripture gives us an account of the necessity of such judgments, to keep up reverential thoughts of God in the world. *Psal.* 9. 16. *The Lord is known by the judgment which he executes, the wicked is snared in the work of his own hand.* And jealousy is the name of God, *Exod.* 34. 14. *Whose name is Jealous:* he is distinguished from false gods by the judgments which he sends, as men are by their names. Extraordinary prodigies in many nations have been the heralds of extraordinary judgments, and presages of the particular judgments which afterwards they have felt, of which the Roman histories, and others are full. That there are such things is undeniable, and the events have been answerable to the threatening, unless we will throw away all human testimonies, and count all the histories of the world forgeries. Such things are evidences of some invisible powers which orders those affairs. And if there be invisible powers, there is also an efficacious cause which moves them: a government certainly there is among

them, as well as in the world, and then we must come to some supreme governor which presides over them.

Judgments upon notorious offenders have been evident in all ages; the scriptures give many instances. I shall only mention that of Herod Agrippa, which Josephus mentions. * He receives the flattering applause of the people, and thought himself a God. But by a sudden stroke, he was forced by his torture to confess another. "I am God," saith he, "in your account, but a higher calls me away: the will of the heavenly Deity is not to be resisted." *The angel of the Lord smote him.* The judgment here was suited to the sin; he that would be a God is eaten up of worms, the vilest creatures. Tully Hostilius, a Roman king, who counted it the most unroyal thing to be religious, or own any other God but his sword, was consumed himself and his whole house by lightning from heaven. Many things are unaccountable unless we have recourse to God. The strange revelations of murderers, that have most secretly committed their crimes; the making good some dreadful imprecations, which some wretches have used to confirm a lie, and immediately have been struck with that judgment they wished; the raising often unexpected persons to be instruments of vengeance on a sinful and perfidious nation; the overturning the deepest and surest counsels of men, when they have had a successful progress, and came to the very point of execution; the whole design of men's preservation hath been broken in pieces by some unforeseen circumstance, so that judgments have broken in upon them without controul, and all their subtilties been out-witted; the strange crossing of some in their estates, though the most wise, industrious, and frugal, and that by stranger and unexpected ways; and it is observable, how often every thing contributes to carry on a judgment intended, as if they rationally designed it. All these things loudly proclaim a God in the world. If there were no God, there would be no sin; and if no sin, there would be no punishment.

* Lib. 19. Antiq. Act. 12. 21, 22, 23.

2. In *miracles*. The course of nature is uniform; and when it is put out of its course, it must be by some superior power invisible to the world; and by whatsoever invisible instruments they are wrought, the efficacy of them must depend upon some first cause above nature. *Psal.* 72. 18. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who only doeth wonderous things*, by himself and his sole power. That which cannot be the result of a natural cause, must be the result of something supernatural: what is beyond the reach of nature, is the effect of a power superior to nature. For it is quite against the order of nature, and is the elevation of something to such a pitch, which all nature could not advance it to. Nature cannot go beyond its own limits: if it be determined by another, as hath been formerly proved, it cannot lift itself above itself, without that power that so determined it. Natural agents act necessarily; the sun necessarily shines, fire necessarily burns. That cannot be the result of nature, which is above the ability of nature. That cannot be the work of nature which is against the order of nature: nature cannot do any thing against itself, or invert its own course.

We must own that such things have been, or we must accuse all the records of former ages as false; which whosoever doth, destroys the greatest and best part of human knowledge. The miracles mentioned in scripture, wrought by our Saviour, are acknowledged by the heathen, and by the Jews at this day, though his greatest enemies. There is no dispute whether such things were wrought, the dead raised, the blind restored to sight. The heathens have acknowledged the miraculous eclipse of the sun, at the passion of Christ, quite against the rule of nature, the moon being then in opposition to the sun. The propagation of christianity contrary to the methods whereby other religions have been propagated, that in a few years the nations of the world should be enlightened with this doctrine, and give in a greater catalogue of martyrs courting the devouring flames, than all the religions of the world.

To this might be added, the strange hand that was

over the Jews, the only people in the world professing the true God, that should so often be befriended by their conquerors, so as to rebuild their temple, though they were looked upon as a people apt to rebel. Dion and Seneca observe, that wherever they were transplanted, they prospered and gave laws to the victors. So that this proves also the authority of the scripture, the truth of the Christian religion, as well as the being of a God, and a superior power over the world. To this might be added, the bridling the tumultuous passions of men for the preservation of human societies, which else would run the world into inconceivable confusion, *Psal.* 65. 7. *Which stilleth the noise of the sea, and the tumults of the people.* As also the miraculous deliverance of a person or nation, when upon the very brink of ruin; the sudden answer of prayer when God hath been sought to, and the turning away a judgment, which in reason could not be expected to be averted, and the raising a sunk people from a ruin which seemed inevitable, by unexpected ways.

3. Accomplishments of *Prophecies.* Those things which are purely contingent, and cannot be known by natural signs and in their causes, as eclipses and changes in nations, which may be discerned by an observation of the signs of the times; such things that fall not within this compass, if they be foretold and come to pass, are solely from some higher hand, and above the cause of nature. This in scripture is asserted to be a notice of the true God, *Isa.* 41. 23. *Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are God,* and *Isa.* 46. 10. *I am God declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* And prophecy was consented to by all the philosophers to be from divine illumination. That power which discovers things future, which all the foresight of men cannot ken and conjecture, is above nature. And to foretel them so certainly as if they already existed, or had existed long ago, must be the result of a mind infinitely

intelligent; because it is the highest way of knowing, and a higher cannot be imagined: and he that knows things future in such a manner, must needs know things present and past. Cyrus was prophesied of by *Isa.* chap. 44. 28. & 45. 1. long before he was born: His victories, spoils, all that should happen in Babylon; and his bounty to the Jews, all came to pass, according to that prophecy; and the sight of that prophecy which the Jews shewed him, as other historians report, was that which moved him to be favourable to the Jews. Alexander's sight of Daniel's prophecy concerning his victories moved him to spare Jerusalem. And are not the four monarchies plainly deciphered in that book, before the fourth rose up in the world? That power which foretells things beyond the reach of the wit of man, and orders all causes to bring about those predictions, must be an infinite Power, the same that made the world, sustains it and governs all things in it according to his pleasure, and to bring about his own ends: And this being is God.

PART III.

THE DANGER OF ATHEISM.

Atheism would subvert the foundation of government—Would introduce all evil into the world—Is dangerous to the Atheist himself—Aboundings of atheism—Impossible to demonstrate there is no God—All creation against the Atheist—Doubts and terrors of Atheists—Why they wish to believe there is no God—Importance of faith in the existence of God—To his worship—To the regulation and comfort of life—Acknowledging his existence, we must study him in the creatures—In ourselves—Must worship him—Often think of him.

IF atheism be a folly; it is then *pernicious to the world*, and to *the Atheist himself*. Wisdom is the band of human societies; the glory of man. Folly is the disturber of families, cities, nations: The disgrace of human nature.

1. It is pernicious to *the world*.—1. As it would root out the *foundations of government*. It demolisheth all order in nations. The being of a God is the guard of the world: The sense of a God is the foundation of civil order; without this there is no tie upon the consciences of men. What force would there be in oaths for the decisions of controversies, what right could there be in appeals made to one that had no being? A city of atheists would be a heap of confusion; there could be no ground of any commerce, when all the sacred bands of it in the consciences of men were snapt asunder, which are torn

to pieces and utterly destroyed by denying the existence of God. What magistrate could be secure in his standing, what private person could be secure in his right? *Can that then be a truth that is destructive of all public good? If the atheist's sentiment, that there were no God, were a truth; and the contrary that there were a God, were a falsity; it would then follow, that falsity made men good and serviceable to one another: that error were the foundation of all the beauty and order, and outward felicity of the world; the fountain of all good to man. If there were no God, to believe there is one would be an error, and to believe there is none would be the greatest wisdom, because it would be the greatest truth. And then as it is the greatest wisdom to fear God, upon the apprehension of his existence; † so it would be the greatest error to fear him, if there were none. It would unquestionably follow, that error is the support of the world, the spring of all human advantages; and that every part of the world were obliged to a falsity for being a quiet habitation, which is the most absurd thing to imagine. It is a thing impossible to be tolerated by any prince, without laying an axe to the root of the government.

2. It would introduce *all evil into the world.* If you take away God, you take away conscience, and thereby all measures and rules of good and evil. And how could any laws be made when the measure and standard of them were removed? All good laws are founded upon the dictates of conscience and reason, upon common sentiments in human nature, which spring from a sense of God; so that if the foundation be demolished, the whole superstructure must fall: A man might be a thief, a murderer, an adulterer, and could not in a strict sense be an offender. The worst of actions could not be evil, if a man were a God to himself, a law to himself. Nothing but evil deserves censure, and nothing would be evil, if there were no

* Lessius de Provid. pa. 665.

† Psal. 111. 19.

God, the rector of the world, against whom evil is properly committed.

No man can make that morally evil that is not so in itself. As where there is a faint sense of God, the heart is more strongly inclined to wickedness; so where there is no sense of God, the bars are removed, the flood-gates set open for all wickedness to rush in upon mankind. Religion pinions men from abominable practices, and restrains them from being slaves to their own passions: an atheist's arms would be loose to do any thing. * Nothing so villanous and unjust but would be acted, if the natural fear of a Deity were extinguished. The first consequence issuing from the apprehension of the existence of God, is his government of the world. If there be no God, then the natural consequence is, that there is no supreme Governor of the world: Such a notion would banish all sentiments of good, and be like the Trojan horse, whence all impurity, tyranny, and all sorts of mischiefs would break out upon mankind: Corruption and abominable works in the text are the fruit of the fool's persuasion that there is no God. The perverting the ways of men, oppression, and extortion owe their rise to a forgetfulness of God, *Jer.* 3. 21. *They have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God. Ezek.* 22. 12. *Thou hast greedily gained by extortion and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord.* The whole earth would be filled with violence, all flesh would corrupt their way, as it was before the deluge, when probably atheism did abound more than idolatry; and if not a disowning the being, yet denying the providence of God by the posterity of Cain: Those of the family of Seth only *calling upon the name of the Lord, Gen.* 6. 11. 12. compared with *Gen.* 4. 26.

The greatest sense of a Deity in any, hath been attended with the greatest innocence of life and usefulness to others; and a weaker sense hath been attended with a baser impurity. † If there were no God,

* Lessius de Provid. p. 664. † Lessius de Provid. p. 665.

blasphemy would be praise-worthy: as the reproach of idols is praise-worthy, because we testify that there is no divinity in them. What can be more contemptible than that which hath no being? Sin would be only a false opinion of a violated law, and an offended Deity. If such apprehensions prevail, what a wide door is opened to the worst of villanies? If there be no God, no respect is due to him; all the religion in the world is a trifle, and error, and thus the pillars of all human society, and that which hath made common-wealths to flourish, are blown away.

2. It is pernicious to *the atheist himself.* If he fear no future punishment, he can never expect any future reward: All his hopes must be confined to a swinish and despicable manner of life, without any imaginations of so much as a dram of reserved happiness. He is in a worse condition than the silliest animal, which hath something to please it in its life: whereas an atheist can have nothing here to give him full content, no more than any other man in the world, and can have less satisfaction hereafter. He deposeth the noble end of his own being, which was to serve God and have a satisfaction in him, to seek God and be rewarded by him; and he that departs from his end, recedes from his own nature. All the content any creature finds, is in performing its end, moving according to its natural instinct. As it is a joy to the *sun to run its race;* * in the same manner it is a satisfaction to every other creature, and its delight, to observe the law of its creation. What content can any man have that runs from his end, oppposeth his own nature, denies God by whom and for whom he was created, whose image he bears, which is the glory of his nature; and sinks into the very dregs of brutishness? How elegantly is it described by Bildad,† *His own counsel shall cast him down, terrors shall make him afraid on every side, destruction shall be ready at his side, the first born of*

* Psal. 19. 5.

† Job 18. 7. 8. &c. to the end.

*death shall devour his strength, his confidence shall be rooted out, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors: Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation, he shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world; they that come after him shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted: and this is the place of him that knows not God.** If there be a future reckoning, as his own conscience cannot but sometimes inform him of, his condition is desperate, and his misery dreadful and unavoidable: it is not righteous that hell should entertain any, if it refuse him.

How lamentable is it, that in our times this folly of atheism should so abound! That there should be found such monsters in human nature, in the midst of the improvements of reason, and shinings of the gospel, who not only make the scripture the matter of their jeers, but scoff at the judgments and providences of God in the world, and envy their Creator a being, without whose goodness they had had none themselves; who contradict in their carriage what they assert to be their sentiment, when they dreadfully imprecate damnation to themselves? Whence should that damnation they so rashly wish, be poured forth upon them, if there were not a revenging God? Formerly atheism was as rare as prodigious, scarce two or three known in an age. And those that are reported to be so in former ages, are rather thought to be counted so, for mocking at the senseless deities the common people adored, and laying open their impurities. A mere natural strength would easily discover that those whom they adored for gods, could not deserve that title, since their original was known, their uncleanness manifest and acknowledged by their worshippers. And probably it was so, † since the Christians were termed ἄθεοι, because they acknowledged not their vain idols.

I question whether there ever was, or can be in the world, an uninterrupted and internal denial of the being

* Ver. 21.

† As Justin informs us.

of God, or that men, unless we can suppose conscience utterly dead, can arrive to such a degree of impiety. For before they can stifle such sentiments in them, whatsoever they may assert, they must be utter strangers to the common conceptions of reason, and despoil themselves of their own humanity. He that dares to deny a God with his lips, yet sets up something or other as a God in his heart. Is it not lamentable that this sacred truth, consented to by all nations, which is the band of civil societies, the source of all order in the world, should be denied, disputed against with such effrontery; and the glory of a wise Creator be ascribed to an unintelligent nature, to blind chance? Are not such worse than heathens? They worshipped many gods, these none; they preserved a notion of God in the world under a disguise of images; these would banish him both from earth and heaven, and demolish the statues of him in their own consciences; they degraded him, these would destroy him; they coupled creatures with him, *Rom.* 1. 25. *They worshipped the creature with the Creator*, as it may most properly be rendered; and these would make him worse than the creature, a mere nothing. Earth is hereby become worse than hell. Atheism is a persuasion, which finds no footing any where else. Hell, that receives such persons, in this point reforms them. They can never deny or doubt of his being, while they feel his strokes. The devil, that rejoices at their wickedness, knows them to be in an error; for he *believes and trembles.** This is a fore-runner of judgment; boldness in sin is a presage of vengeance, especially when the honour of God is more particularly concerned therein. It tends to the overturning human society, taking off the bridle from the wicked inclinations of men. And God appears not in such visible judgments against sin immediately committed against himself, as in the case of those sins that are destructive to human society. Besides, God, as governor of the world, will uphold that, without which all his ordinances in the world would be useless. Atheism is point blank

* Jam. 2. 19.

against all the glory of God in creation, and against all the glory of God in redemption, and pronounces at one breath, both the Creator, and all acts of religion and divine institutions, useless and insignificant. Since most have had at one time or other some risings of doubt, whether there be a God, though few do in expressions deny his being, it may not be unnecessary to propose some things for the further impressing this truth, and guarding themselves against such temptations.

1. It is utterly *impossible to demonstrate there is no God.* He can choose no medium, but will fall in as a proof for his existence, and a manifestation of his excellency, rather than against it. The pretences of the atheist are so ridiculous, that they are not worth the mentioning. They never saw God, and therefore know not how to believe such a being; they cannot comprehend him. He would not be God, if he could fall within the narrow model of a human understanding: He would not be infinite, if he were comprehensible, or to be terminated by our sight. How small a thing must that be which is seen by a bodily eye, or grasped by a weak mind? If God were visible or comprehensible, he would be limited. Shall it be a sufficient demonstration from a blind man, that there is no fire in a room because he sees it not, though he feel the warmth of it? The knowledge of the effects is sufficient to conclude the existence of the cause. Whoever saw his own life? Is it sufficient to deny a man lives, because he beholds not his life, and only knows it by his motion? He never saw his own soul, but knows he hath one by his thinking power. The air renders itself sensible to men in its operations, yet was never seen by the eye.

If God should render himself visible, they might question as well as now, whether that which was so visible, were God or some delusion. If he should appear glorious, we can as little behold him in his majestic glory, as an owl can behold the sun in its brightness; we should still but see him in his effects, as we do the sun by his beams. If he should shew a new miracle, we should still see him but by his works; so we see him in his creatures,

every one of which would be as great a miracle as any can be wrought, to one that had the first prospect of them. To require to see God, is to require that which is impossible, 1 *Tim.* 6. 16. *He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see.* It is visible that he is, *for he covers himself with light as with a garment, Psal.* 104. 2. It is invisible what he is, *for he makes darkness his secret place, Psal.* 18. 11. Nothing more clear to the eye than light, and nothing more difficult to the understanding than the nature of it: as light is the first object obvious to the eye, so is God the first object obvious to the understanding. The arguments from nature do with greater strength evince his existence, than any pretences can manifest there is no God. No man can assure himself by any good reason there is none. For as for the *likeness of events to him that is righteous and him that is wicked, to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not, Eccles.* 9. 2. it is an argument for a reserve of judgment in another state, which every man's conscience dictates to him; when the justice of God shall be glorified in another world, as much as his patience is in this.

2. Whosoever doubts of it, *makes himself a mark*, against which all the creatures fight. All the stars fought against Sisera for Israel. All the stars in heaven, and the dust on earth, fight for God against the atheist. He hath as many arguments against him as there are creatures in the whole compass of heaven and earth. He is most unreasonable, that denies or doubts of that whose image and shadow he sees round about him; he may sooner deny the sun that warms him, the moon that in the night walks in her brightness, deny the fruits he enjoys from the earth, yea and deny that he exists. He must tear his own conscience, fly from his own thoughts, be changed into the nature of a stone which hath neither reason nor sense, before he can disengage himself from those arguments which evince the being of a God. He that would make the natural religion professed in the world a mere romance, must give the lie to the common sense of mankind; he must be at an irreconcileable enmity with his

own reason, resolve to hear nothing that it speaks, if he will not hear what it speaks in this case, with a greater evidence than it can ascertain any thing else. God hath so settled himself in the reason of man, that he must vilify the noblest faculty God hath given him, and put off nature itself before he can blot out the notion of a God.

3. No question but those that have been so bold as to deny that there was a God, *have sometimes been much afraid they have been in an error*, and have at least suspected there was a God, when some sudden prodigy hath presented itself to them and roused their fears. And whatsoever sentiments they might have in their blinding prosperity, they have had other kind of motions in them in their stormy afflictions: and like Jonah's mariners have been ready to cry to him for help, whom they disdained to own so much as in being, while they swam in their pleasures. The thoughts of a Deity cannot be so extinguished, but they will revive and rush upon a man, at least under some sharp affliction. Amazing judgments will make them question their own apprehensions. God sends some messengers to keep alive the apprehension of him as a judge, while men resolve not to own or reverence him as a governor. A man cannot but keep a scent of what was born with him. As a vessel that hath been seasoned first with a strong juice will preserve the scent of it, whatsoever liquors are afterwards put into it.

4. *What is it* for which such men rack their wits, to form notions, that there is no God? Is it not that they would indulge some vicious habit, which hath gained possession of their souls, which they know cannot be favoured by that holy God, whose notion they would raze out?* Is it not for some brutish affection, as degenerative of human nature, as derogatory to the glory of God; a lust as unmanly as sinful? The terrors of God are the effects of guilt; and therefore men would wear out the apprehensions of a Deity, that they might be brutish without controul. They would fain believe there

* Psal. 94. 6, 7.

were no God, that they might not be men, but beasts. How great a folly is it to take so much pains in vain, for a slavery and torment? to cast off that which they call a yoke, for that which really is one? There is more pains and obstinacy of soul requisite to shake off the apprehensions of God, than to believe that he is, and cleave constantly to him. What a madness is it in any to take so much pains to be less than a man, by razing out the apprehensions of God, when with less pains, he may be more than an earthly man, by cherishing the notions of God, and walking answerably thereunto.

5. *How unreasonable is it for any man to hazard himself* at this rate in the denial of a God! The atheist saith he knows not that there is a God; but may he not reasonably think there may be one for ought he knows? and if there be, what a desperate confusion will he be in, when all his bravadoes shall prove false? What can they gain by such an opinion? a freedom, say they, from the burdensome yoke of conscience, a liberty to do what they list: That doth not subject them to divine laws. It is an hard matter to persuade any that they can gain this. They can gain but a sordid pleasure unworthy the nature of man. But it were well, that such would argue thus with themselves: If there be a God, and I fear and obey him, I gain a happy eternity; but if there be no God, I lose nothing but my sordid lusts, by firmly believing there is one. If I be deceived at last, and find a God, can I think to be rewarded by him, for disowning him? Do not I run a desperate hazard to lose his favour, his kingdom, and endless felicity, for an endless torment? By confessing a God, I venture no loss; but by denying him I run the most desperate hazard, if there be one. He is not a reasonable creature, that will not put himself upon such a reasonable arguing. What a doleful meeting will there be between the God who is denied, and the atheist that denies him, who shall meet with reproaches on God's part, and terrors on his own? All that he gains is a liberty to defile himself here, and a certainty to be despised hereafter, if he be in an error, as undoubtedly he is.

6. Can any such person say *he hath done all that he can* to inform himself of the being of God, or of other things which he denies? Or rather they would fain imagine there is none, that they may sleep securely in their lusts and be free, if they could, from the thunder-claps of conscience? Can such say they have used their utmost endeavours to instruct themselves in this, and can meet with no satisfaction? Were it an abstruse truth it might not be wondered at: but not to meet with satisfaction in this which every thing reminds us of, is the fruit of an extreme negligence, stupidity, and a willingness to be unsatisfied, and a judicial process of God against them. It is strange that any man should be so dark in that upon which depends the conduct of his life, and the expectation of happiness hereafter. I do not know what some of you may think, but I believe these things are not useless to be proposed for ourselves to answer temptations: We know not what wicked temptation in a debauched and sceptic age, meeting with a corrupt heart, may prompt men to: and though there may not be any atheist here present, yet I know there is more than one, who have accidentally met with such as openly denied a Deity. And if the like occasion happen, these considerations may not be unuseful to apply to their consciences. But I must confess, that since those that live in this sentiment, do not judge themselves worthy of their own care, they are not worthy of the care of others; and a man must have all the charity of the christian religion, which they despise, not to contemn them, and leave them to their own folly. As we are to pity madmen, who sink under an unavoidable distemper, we are as much to abominate them, who will fully indulge this prodigious frenzy. If it be the atheist's *folly* to deny or doubt of the being of God, it is our *wisdom* to be firmly settled in this truth, THAT GOD IS. We should never be without our arms in an age wherein atheism appears bare-faced without a disguise.

You may meet with suggestions to it; though the devil formerly never attempted to demolish this notion in the

world, but was willing to keep it up, so the worship due to God might run in his own channel; and was necessitated to preserve it, without which he could not have erected that idolatry, which was his great design in opposition to God. Yet since the foundations of that are torn up, and never like to be rebuilt, he may endeavour, as his last refuge, to banish the notion of God out of the world; that he may reign as absolutely without it, as he did before by the mistakes about the divine nature. But we must not lay all upon Satan; the corruption of our own hearts ministers matter to such sparks. It is not said, Satan hath suggested to the fool, but *the fool hath said in his heart* there is no God. But let them come from what principle soever, silence them quickly, give them their dismissal; oppose the whole scheme of nature to fight against them, as the stars did against Sisera. Stir up sentiments of conscience to oppose sentiments of corruption. Resolve sooner to believe, that yourselves are not, than that God is not: and if you suppose they at any time come from Satan, object to him that you know he believes the contrary to what he suggests. Settle this principle firmly in you, let us behold him that is invisible, as Moses did. * Let us have the sentiments following upon the notion of a God; to be restrained by a fear of him, excited by a love to him, not to violate his laws and offend his goodness. He is not a God careless of our actions, negligent to inflict punishment, and bestow rewards, *he forgets not the labour of our love*,† nor the integrity of our ways. He were not a God if he were not a governor; and punishments and rewards are as essential to government as a foundation to a building. His being and his government in rewarding, which implies punishment,‡ are not to be separated in our thoughts of him.

1. Without this truth fixed in us, *we can never give him the worship due to his name.* When the knowledge of any thing is fluctuating and uncertain, our actions about it are careless. We regard not that which we think doth not much concern us. If we do not firmly

* Heb. 11. 27. † Heb. 6. 10. ‡ Heb. 11. 6.

believe there is a God, we shall pay him no steady worship; and if we believe not the excellency of his nature, we shall offer him but a slight service. * The Jews † call the knowledge of the being of God, the foundation and pillar of wisdom. The whole frame of religion is dissolved without this apprehension, and totters if this apprehension be wavering. Religion in the heart is as water in a weather-glass which rises or falls according to the strength or weakness of this belief. How can any man worship that which he believes not to be, or doubts of? Could any man omit paying homage to one whom he believed to be an omnipotent, wise being, possessing, infinitely above our conceptions, the perfections of all creatures? He must either think there is no such being, or that he is a supine or inattentive God, and not such a one as our natural notions of him, if listened to, as well as the Scripture, represent him to be.

2. Without being rooted in this, *we cannot order our lives.* All our baseness, stupidity, dulness, wanderings, vanity, spring from a wavering and unsettledness in this principle. This gives ground to brutish pleasures, not only to solicit but conquer us. Abraham expected violence in any place where God was not owned, *Gen.* 20. 11. *Surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they will slay me for my wife's sake.* The natural knowledge of God firmly impressed, would subdue that which would stifle our reason and deface our souls. The belief that God is, and what he is, would have a mighty influence to persuade us to a real religion, and serious consideration, and casting about how to be like to him and united with him.

3. Without it *we cannot have any comfort of our lives.* Who would willingly live in a stormy world, void of a God? If we waver in this principle, to whom should we make our complaints in our afflictions? Where should we meet with supports? How could we satisfy ourselves with the hopes of a future happiness? There is a sweetness in the meditation of his existence, and that he is a

* Mal. 1. 13, 14. † Maimon. funda. Legis, cap. 1.

Creator. * Thoughts of other things have a bitterness mixed with them. Houses, lands, children, which now are, shortly will not be; but God is, that made the world: his faithfulness as he is a Creator, is a ground to rest our souls and all our concerns in our innocent sufferings. † So far as we are weak in the acknowledgement of God, we deprive ourselves of our content in the view of his infinite perfections.

4. Without the rooting of this principle, *we cannot have a firm belief of the scriptures.* The scripture will be a slight thing to one that hath weak sentiments of God. The belief of a God must necessarily precede the belief of any revelation; the latter cannot take place without the former as the foundation. We must firmly believe the being of a God, wherein our happiness consists, before we can believe any means which conduct us to him: Moses begins with the author of creation, before he treats of the promise of redemption. Paul preached God as a *creator*, before he preached Christ as mediator. ‡ What influence can the testimony of God have in his revelation upon one that doth not firmly assent to the truth of his being? All would be in vain that is so often repeated, *thus saith the Lord*, if we do not believe there is a Lord that speaks it. There could be no awe from his sovereignty in his commands, nor any comfortable taste of his goodness in his promises. The more we are strengthened in this principle, the more credit we shall be able to give to divine revelation, to rest in his promise, and to reverence his precept; the authority of all depends upon the being of the revealer.

To this purpose, since we have handled this discourse by natural arguments,

1. Study God in the *creatures* as well as in the scriptures. The primary use of the creatures, is to acknowledge God in them; they were made to be witnesses of himself and his goodness, and heralds of

* Psal. 104. 24. † 1 Pet. 4. 19.
‡ Acts 17. 24.

his glory, which glory of God as Creator *shall endure for ever*, *Psal.* 104. 31. The world is a sacred temple? man is introduced to contemplate it, and behold with praise the glory of God in the pieces of his art. As grace doth not destroy nature, so the book of redemption does not supersede that of creation. Had he not shewn himself in his creatures, he could never have shown himself in his son: the order of things required it. God must be read wherever he is legible; the creatures are one book, wherein he hath written a part of the excellency of his name, * as many artists do in their works. God's glory, like the filings of gold, is too precious to be lost wherever it drops; nothing so vile and base in the world, but carries in it an instruction for man, and fixes more deeply the notion of a God. As he said of his cottage; enter here, *Sunt hic etiam Dii*, God disdains not this place: so the least creature speaks to man, every shrub in the field, every fly in the air, every limb of a body says consider me, God disdains not to appear in me; he hath discovered in me his being and a part of his skill, as well as in the highest. The creatures manifest the being of God and part of his perfections. We have indeed a more excellent way, a revelation setting him forth in a more excellent manner, a firmer object of dependence, a brighter object of love, raising our hearts from self-confidence to a confidence in him. Though the appearance of God in the one be clearer than in the other, yet neither is to be neglected: The scripture directs us to nature to view God; it had been in vain else for the apostle to make use of natural arguments. Nature is not contrary to scripture, nor scripture to nature; unless we should think God contrary to himself, who is the author of both.

2. View God in *your own experiences of him.* There is a taste and sight of his goodness, though no sight of his essence. † By the taste of his goodness you may know the reality of the fountain, whence it springs and

* Psal. 8. 9. † Psal. 34. 38.

from whence it flows: This surpasseth the greatest capacity of a mere natural understanding. Experience of the sweetness of the ways of Christianity is a mighty perservative against atheism. Many a man knows not how to prove honey to be sweet by his reason, but by his sense; and if all the reason in the world be brought against it, he will not be reasoned out of what he tastes. Have not many found the delightful illapses of God into their souls, often sprinkled with his inward blessings upon their seeking of him; had secret warnings in their approaches to him; and gentle rebukes in their consciences upon their swervings from him? Have not many found sometimes an invisible hand raising them up when they were dejected; some unexpected providence stepping in for their relief; and easily perceived that it could not be a work of chance, nor many times the intention of the instruments he had used in it? You have often found *that he is*, by finding that he is a *rewarder*, and can set to your seals that he is what he hath declared himself to be in his word, *Isa.* 43. 12. *I have declared, and have saved, therefore you are my witnesses saith the Lord, that I am God.* The secret touches of God upon the heart, and inward converses with him, are a greater evidence of the existence of a supreme and infinitely good Being, than all nature.

3. Is it a folly to deny or doubt of the being of God? It is a folly also *not to worship God*, when we acknowledge his existence: It is our wisdom then to worship him. As it is not indifferent whether we believe there is a God or no; so it is not indifferent whether we give honour to that God or no. A worship is his right as he is the author of our being, and fountain of our happiness. By this only we acknowledge his Deity; though we profess his being, yet we deny that profession in neglects of worship. To deny him worship is as great a folly as to deny his being. He that renounceth all homage to his Creator, envies him the being which he cannot deprive him of. The natural inclination to worship is as universal as the notion of a God; idolatry else had never gained footing in the world. The existence of God was never

owned in any nation, but a worship of him was appointed. And many people who have turned their backs upon some other parts of the law of nature, have paid a continual homage to some superior and invisible being. The Jews give a reason why man was created in the evening of the sabbath, because he should begin his being with the worship of his Maker. As soon as ever he found himself to be a creature, his first solemn act should be a particular respect to his Creator. * *To fear God and keep his commandment, is the whole duty of man*, or is the whole man; he is not a man but a beast, without observance of God. Religion is as requisite as reason to complete a man; he were not reasonable if he were not religious; because by neglecting religion he neglects the chiefest dictate of reason. Either God framed the world with so much order, elegance, and variety to no purpose, or this was his end at least, that reasonable creatures should admire him in it, and honour him for it. The notion of God was not stamped upon men, the shadows of God did not appear in the creatures, to be the subject of an idle contemplation, but the motive of a due homage to God. He created the world for his glory, a people for himself, that he might have the honour of his works: That since we *live and move in him and by him*, we should live and move to him and for him. It was the condemnation of the heathen world, that when they knew there was a God, they did not give him the glory due to him. † He that denies his being is an atheist to his essence; he that denies his worship is an atheist to his honour.

4. If it be a folly to deny the being of God, It will be our wisdom then, since we acknowledge his being, *often to think of him.* Thoughts are the first issue of a creature as reasonable. ‡ He that hath given us the faculty whereby we are able to think, should be the principal object about which the power of it should be exercised. It is justice to God, the author of our understandings, justice to the nature of our understandings, that the noblest faculty should be employed about the most excel-

* Eccl. 12. 12. † Rom. 1. 21. ‡ Prov. 4. 23.

lent object. Our minds are a beam from God; and therefore, as the beams of the sun, when they touch the earth, should reflect back upon God. As we seem to deny the being of God, not to think of him, we seem also to unsoul our souls, in misemploying the activity of them any other way. It is made the black mark of an ungodly man, or an atheist, that *God is not in all his thoughts, Psal.* 10. 4. What comfort can be had in the being of God without thinking of him with reverence and delight? A God forgotten is as no God to us.

PRACTICAL ATHEISM.

Psalm xiv. 1.

THE FOOL HATH SAID IN HIS HEART, THERE IS NO GOD; THEY ARE CORRUPT, THEY HAVE DONE ABOMINABLE WORKS; THERE IS NONE THAT DOETH GOOD.

PART I.

EVERY NATURAL MAN IS A PRACTICAL ATHEIST.

Principles discovered by actions—All sin founded in secret Atheism—Sin implies that God is unworthy of being—Would render God a foolish and impure being—Endeavours to render him a most miserable being—Would annihilate God—Man naturally disowns the law prescribed for his government—Is naturally unwilling to know it—Neglects the means of knowing the divine will—Endeavours to shake off all conviction of obligation to obey it—Has no pleasure in the intimations of his will—His enmity against it—The considerations which influence some in wishing to be acquainted with it—Their unsettled and wavering affections—corrupt designs—unwillingness to be acquainted with divine truth—Because it is spiritual---Leads to God---Is contrary to self.

PRACTICAL Atheism is natural to man in his depraved state, and very frequent in the hearts and lives of men.

The fool hath said in his heart there is no God. He regards him as little as if he had no being: he said in his

heart, not with his tongue, nor in his head: he never firmly thought it, nor openly asserted it: shame put a bar to the first, and natural reason to the second. Yet perhaps he had sometimes doubts whether there were a God or no: he wished there were not any, and sometimes hoped there were none at all: he could not raze out the notion of a Deity in his mind, but he neglected the fixing the sense of God in his heart, and made it too much his business to deface and blot out those characters of God in his soul, which had been left under the ruins of original nature. Men may have atheistical hearts without atheistical heads. Their reasons may defend the notion of a Deity, while their hearts are empty of affection to the Deity: *Job's* children may curse *God in their hearts*, though not with their lips. *Job* i. 5.

There is no God. Most understand it of a denial of the providence of God; as I have said in opening the former doctrine. He who adopts such language denies some essential *attribute* of God, or the *exercise* of that attribute in the world. So the Chaldee reads, ליט שולטנא Non potestas, *denying the authority of God in the world.*

He that denies any essential attribute, may be said to deny the being of God. Whosoever denies angels or men to have reason and will, denies the human and angelical nature, because understanding and will are essential to both those natures; there could neither be angel nor man without them. No nature can subsist without the perfections essential to that nature, nor God be conceived of without his: the apostle tells us, *Eph.* 2. 12. that the *Gentiles* were *without God in the world:* so in some sense all unbelievers may be termed atheists; for rejecting the mediator appointed by God, they reject that God who appointed him.

But this is beyond the intended scope, natural atheism being the only subject: yet this is deducible from it. That the title of ἄθεοι, doth not only belong to those who denied the existence of God, or to those who contemn all sense of a Deity, and would root the conscience and reverence of God out of their souls: but it belongs also to

these who give not that worship to God which is due to him: who worship many gods, or who worship one God in a false and superstitious manner; when they have not right conceptions of God, nor intend an adoration of him according to the excellency of his nature: all those that are unconcerned for any particular religion, fall under this character. Though they own a God in general, yet are willing to acknowledge any God that shall be coined by the powers under whom they live. The Gentiles were without God in the world; without the true notion of God, not without a God of their own framing. This general or practical atheism is natural to men.

1. Not natural by *created* but by *corrupted* nature. It is against nature, as nature came out of the hand of God; but universally natural, as nature hath been sophisticated and infected by the serpent's breath. Inconsideration of God, or misrepresentations of his nature, are as agreeable to corrupt nature, as the disowning the being of a God is contrary to common reason. God is not denied *natura sed vitiis.* *

2. It is *universally* natural. *The wicked are estranged from the womb, Psal.* 58. 3. *They go astray as soon as they are born, their poison is like the poison of a serpent.* The wicked: and who by his birth hath a better title? They go astray from the dictates of God and the rule of their creation as soon as ever they are born; their poison is like the poison of the serpent, which is radically the same in all of the same species. It is seminally and fundamentally in all men, though there may be a stronger restraint by a divine hand upon some men than upon others. This principle runs through the whole stream of nature. The natural bent of every man's heart is distant from God. When we attempt any thing pleasing to God, it is like the climbing up a hill, against nature; when any thing is displeasing to him, it is like a current running down the channel in its natural course. When we attempt any thing that is an acknowledgment of the holiness of God, we are fain to rush with arms in our hands

* Augustin de Civit. Dei.

through a multitude of natural passions, and fight the way through the oppositions of our own sensitive appetite. How softly do we naturally sink down into that which sets us at a greater distance from God? There is no active, potent, efficacious sense of a God by nature. *The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil, Eccl.* 8. 11. *The heart* in the singular number, as if there were but one common heart beat in all mankind, and bent as with one pulse, with a joint consent and force to wickedness, without a sense of the authority of God in the earth; as if one heart actuated every man in the world.

The great apostle cites the text to verify the charge he brought against all mankind. * In his interpretation, the Jews, who owned one God, and were dignified with special privileges, as well as the Gentiles that maintained many gods, are within the compass of this character. The apostle leaves out the first part of the text, *the fool hath said in his heart*, but takes in the latter part, and the verses following; he charges *all*, because *all*, every man of them, was under sin. *There is none that seeks God*, and verse 19. he adds *what the law saith, it speaks to those that are under the law.* That none should imagine he included only the Gentiles and exempted the Jews from this description. The leprosy of atheism had infected the whole mass of human nature: no man among Jews or Gentiles did naturally seek God; and therefore all were void of any spark of the practical sense of the Deity. The effects of this atheism are not in all externally of an equal size: yet in the fundamentals and radicals of it, there is not a hair's difference between the best and the worst of men that ever traversed the world. The distinction is laid either in the common grace, bounding and suppressing it; or in special grace killing and crucifying it. It is in every one either triumphant or militant, reigning or deposed. No man is any more born with sensible acknowledgments of God, than he is born with a clear knowledge of the nature of all the stars in the heavens, or plants upon the earth. None seeks after

* Rom. 3. 9, 10, 11, 12.

God.* None seeks God as his rule, as his end, as his happiness, which is a debt the creature naturally owes to God; he desires no communion with God: he places his happiness in any thing inferior to God: he prefers every thing before him, glorifies every thing above him; he hath no delight to know him; he regards not those paths which lead to him; he loves his own filth better than God's holiness; his actions are tinctured, and dyed with self, and are void of that respect which is due from him to God.

The noblest faculty of man, his understanding, wherein the remaining lineaments of the image of God are visible; the highest operation of that faculty, which is wisdom, is in the judgment of the Spirit of God devilish, while it is *earthly* and *sensual.*† And the wisdom of the best man is no better by nature; a legion of impure spirits possess it. Devilish, as the devil, who, though he believe there is a God, yet acts as if there were none, and wishes he had no superior to prescribe him a law, and inflict that punishment upon him which his crimes have merited. Hence the poison of man by nature is said to be like the *poison of a serpent*, alluding to that serpentine temptation which first infected mankind, and changed the nature of man into the likeness of that of the devil. ‡ So that notwithstanding the harmony of the world that presents men not only with the notice of the being of a God, but darts into their minds some remarks of his power and eternity; yet the thoughts and reasonings of man are so corrupt, as may well be called diabolical, and as contrary to the perfection of God and the original law of their nature, as the actings of the devil are; for since every natural man is a child of the devil, and is actuated by the diabolical spirit, he must needs have that nature which his father hath, and the infusion of that venom which the spirit that actuates him is possessed with; though the full discovery of it may be restrained by various circumstances, *Eph.* 2. 2. To conclude, though no man, or at least very few, arrive to a positive conclusion in their hearts that there is

* Coccei. † Jam. 3. 15. ‡ Psal. 58. 4.

no God, yet there is no man that naturally hath in his heart any reverence of God.

In general, before I come to a particular proof, take some propositions.

Proposition 1. *Actions are a greater discovery of a principle than words.* The testimony of works is louder and clearer than that of words, and the frame of men's hearts must be measured, rather by what they do, than by what they say. There may be a mighty distance between the tongue and the heart, but a course of actions is as little guilty of lying as interest is, according to our common saying: All outward impieties are the branches of an atheism at the root of our nature, as all pestilential sores are expressions of the contagion in the blood. Sin is therefore frequently called ungodliness in our English dialect. Men's practices are the best indexes of their principles. The current of a man's life, is the counter-part of the frame of his heart. Who can deny an error in the spring or wheels, when he perceives an error in the hand of the dial? Who can deny an atheism in the heart, when so much is visible in the life? The taste of the water discovers what mineral it is strained through. A practical denial of God is worse than a verbal, because deeds have usually more of deliberation than words; words may be the fruit of a passion, but a set of evil actions are the fruit and evidence of a predominant evil principle in the heart: All slighting words of a prince do not argue an habitual treason, but a succession of overt treasonable attempts signifies a settled treasonable disposition in the mind: Those therefore are more deservedly termed atheists, who acknowledge a God and walk as if there were none, than those (if there can be any such) that deny a God and walk as if there were one. A sense of God in the heart will be seen in the life: where there is no reverence of God in the life, 'tis easily concluded there is less in the heart.

What doth not influence a man when it hath the addition of the eyes, and censures of outward spectators, and the care of a reputation (so much the God of

the world) to strengthen it and restrain the action, must certainly have less power over the heart when it is single without any other concurrence. The flames breaking out of a house discover the fire to be much stronger and fiercer within. The apostle judgeth those of the circumcision, who gave heed to Jewish fables, to be deniers of God, though he doth not tax them with any notorious prophaneness. *Tit.* 1. 16. *They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him;* he gives them epithets contrary to what they arrogated to themselves: * They boasted themselves to be holy, the apostle calls them abominable; they boasted that they fulfilled the law and observed the traditions of their fathers, the apostle calls them disobedient, or unpersuadable; they boasted that they only had the rule of righteousness, and a sound judgment concerning it, the apostle said they had a reprobate sense and were unfit for any good work: and judges against all their vain glorious boastings, that they had not a reverence of God in their hearts; there was more of the denial of God in their works than there was acknowledgment of God in their words: Those that have neither God in their thoughts, nor in their tongues, nor in their works, cannot properly be said to acknowledge him: Where the honour of God is not practically owned in the lives of men, the being of God is not sensibly acknowledged in the hearts of men: The principle must be of the same kind with the actions; if the actions be atheistical, the principle of them can be no better.

Prop. 2. *All sin is founded in a secret atheism.* Atheism is the spirit of every sin; all the floods of impieties in the world break in at the gate of a secret atheism: and though several sins may disagree with one another, yet like Herod and Pilate against Christ, they join hand in hand against the interest of God. Though lusts and pleasures be *divers*, yet they are all united in *disobedience* to him. All the wicked inclinations in the heart, and struggling motions, secret repinings, self-

* Illyric.

applauding confidences in our own wisdom, strength, &c. envy, ambition, revenge, are sparks from this latent fire; the language of every one of these is, I would be a Lord to myself, and would not have a God superior to me.

The variety of sins against the first and second table, the neglects of God, and violences against man, are derived from this in the text, first, *the fool hath said in his heart*, and then follows a legion of devils. As all virtuous actions spring from an acknowledgment of God; so all vicious actions rise from a lurking denial of him. All licentiousness goes smoothly down where there is no sense of God. Abraham judged himself not secure from murder, nor his wife from defilement in Gerar, if there were no *fear of God* there. *Gen.* 20. 11. He that makes no conscience of sin has no regard to the honour, and consequently none to the being of God. *By the fear of God men depart from evil*, *Prov.* 16. 6. By the non-regarding of God men rush into evil. Pharaoh oppressed Israel because he *knew not the Lord.* If he did not deny the being of a Deity, yet he had such an unworthy notion of God as was inconsistent with the nature of a Deity; he, a poor creature, thought himself a mate for the Creator. In sins of omission we own not God, in neglecting to perform what he enjoins: In sins of commission we set up some lust in the place of God, and pay to that the homage which is due to our Maker. In both we disown him; in the one by not doing what he commands, in the other by doing what he forbids.

We deny his sovereignty when we violate his laws; we disgrace his holiness when we persevere in that which is abomination in his sight; we disparage his wisdom when we set up another rule as the guide of our actions than that law he hath fixed; we slight his sufficiency when we prefer a satisfaction in sin before a happiness in him alone, and his goodness when we judge it not strong enough to attract us to him. Every sin invades the rights of God, and strips him of one or other of his perfections. It is such a vilifying of God as if he were not God; as if he were not the supreme

Creator and Benefactor of the world; as if we had not our being from him; as if the air we breathed in, the food we lived by, were our own by right of supremacy, not of donation, For a subject to slight his sovereign is to slight his royalty; or a servant a master, is to deny his superiority.

Prop. 3. *Sin implies that God is unworthy of a being.* Every sin is a kind of *cursing God in the heart;* an aim at the destruction of the being of God; not actually but virtually; not in the intention of every sinner, but in the nature of every sin. That affection which excites a man to break his law, would excite him to annihilate his being if it were in his power. A man in every sin aims to set up his own will as his rule, and his own glory as the end of his actions against the will and glory of God; and could a sinner attain his end, God would be destroyed: God cannot out-live his will and his glory: God cannot have another rule but his own will, nor another end but his own honour. Sin is called a *turning the back* upon God, a *kicking against him*, as if he were a slighter person than the meanest beggar. *Jer.* 32. 33. *Deut.* 32. 15. What greater contempt can be shewed to the meanest, vilest person, than to turn the back, lift up the heel, and thrust away with indignation? All which actions, though they signify that such a one hath a being; yet they testify also that he is unworthy of a being, that he is an useless being in the world, and that it were well the world were rid of him.

All sin against knowledge is called a *reproach* of God. * Reproach is a vilifying a man as unworthy to be admitted into company. We naturally judge God unfit to be conversed with. God is the term turned from by a sinner: Sin is the term turned to; which implies a greater excellency in the nature of sin, than in the nature of God. And as we naturally judge it more worthy to have a being in our affections, so consequently more worthy to have a being in the world, than that infinite nature from whom we derive our beings, and our all; and upon whom

* Num. 15. 20. Ezek. 20. 27.

with a kind of disdain we turn our backs. Whosoever thinks the notion of a Deity unfit to be cherished in his mind by warm meditation, implies that he cares not whether he hath a being in the world or no. Now though the light of a Deity shines so clearly in man, and the stings of conscience are so smart, that he cannot absolutely deny the being of a God; yet most men endeavour to smother this knowledge, and make the notion of a God a sapless and useless thing, *Rom.* 1. 28. *They like not to retain God in their knowledge.*

It is said, Cain *went out from the presence of the Lord, Gen.* 4. 16. That is, from the worship of God. Our refusing or abhorring the presence of a man implies a carelessness whether he continue in the world or no: It is a using him as if he had no being, or as if we were not concerned in it. Hence all men in Adam, under the emblem of the prodigal, are said to go into a far country. Not in respect of place, because of God's omnipresence; but in respect of acknowledgment and affection; they mind and love any thing but God. And the descriptions of the nations of the world, lying in the ruins of Adam's fall, and the dregs of that revolt, is that they *know not God:* They forget God, as if there were no such being above them; and indeed he that doeth the works of the devil, owns the devil to be more worthy of observance, and consequently of a being, than God, whose nature he forgets and whose presence he abhors.

Proposition 4. Every sin in its own nature would render God *a foolish and impure being.* Many transgressors esteem their acts, which are contrary to the law of God, both wise and good: If so, the law against which they are committed, must be both foolish and impure: What a reflection is there then upon the law giver? The moral law is not properly a mere act of God's will considered in itself, or a tyrannical edict, like those of whom it may well be said, *stat pro ratione voluntas:* but it commands those things which are good in their own nature, and prohibits those things which are in their own nature evil; and therefore is an act of his wisdom and righteousness; the result of his wise counsel, and an ex-

tract of his pure nature; as all the laws of just lawgivers are not only the acts of their will, but of a will governed by reason and justice, and for the good of the public, whereof they are conservators. If the moral commands of God were only acts of his will, and had not an intrinsic necessity, reason, and goodness, God might have commanded quite the contrary, and made a contrary law, whereby that which we now call vice, might have been canonized for virtue. He might then have forbid any worship of him, love to him, fear of his name: he might then have commanded murders, thefts, adulteries. In the first he would have untied the link of duty from the creature, and dissolved the obligations of creatures to him, which is impossible to be conceived; for from the relation of a creature to God, obligations to God, and duties upon those obligations, do necessarily result. It had been against the rule of goodness and justice, to have commanded the creature not to love him, and fear and obey him: This had been a command against righteousness, goodness, and intrinsic obligations to gratitude; And should murder, adulteries, rapines have been commanded instead of the contrary, God would have destroyed his own creation; he would have acted against the rule of goodness and order; he had been an unjust tyrannical governor of the world: Public society would have been dissolved, and the world become an *aceldama, a field of blood*, a scene of horror and woe; a place below the common sentiments of a mere man. All sin therefore being against the law of God, the wisdom and holy rectitude of God's nature is denied in every act of disobedience: And what is the consequence of this, but that God is both foolish and unrighteous in commanding that which was neither an act of wisdom, as a governor, nor an act of goodness, as a benefactor to his creature?

As was said before, presumptuous sins are called reproaches of God, *Num.* 15. 30. *The soul that doth ought presumptuously reproacheth the Lord.* Reproaches of men are either for natural, moral, or intellectual defects. All reproaches of God must imply a charge, either of unrighteousness, or ignorance: if of unrighteousness, it is a

denial of his holiness: if of ignorance, it is a blemishing his wisdom. If God's laws were not wise and holy, God would not enjoin them: and if they are so, we deny infinite wisdom and holiness in God by not complying with them. As when a man believes not God when he promises, he *makes him a liar*, 1 *John* 5. 10; so he that obeys not a wise and holy God commanding, makes him guilty either of folly, or unrighteousness. Now suppose you knew an absolute atheist, who denied the being of a God, yet had a life free from any notorious spot or defilement; would you in reason count him so bad as the other that owns a God in being, yet lays, by his course of action, such a black imputation of folly and impurity upon the God he professeth to own; an imputation which renders any man a most despicable creature?

Proposition 5. Sin in its own nature endeavours to render God *the most miserable being*. It is nothing, but an opposition to the will of God: the will of no creature is so much contradicted, as the will of God is by devils and men: and there is nothing under the heavens that the affections of human nature stand more point blank against, than against God. There is a slight of him in all the faculties of man; our souls are as unwilling to know him, as our wills are averse to follow him, *Rom.* 8. 7. *The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject* TO THE LAW OF GOD, *nor can be subject.* It is true, God's will cannot be hindered of its effect, for then God would not be supremely blessed, but unhappy and miserable: all misery ariseth from a want of that, which a nature would have, and ought to have: besides, if any thing could frustrate God's will, it would be superior to him: God would not be omnipotent, and so would lose the perfection of the Deity, and consequently the Deity itself; for that which did wholly defeat God's will, would be more powerful than he. But sin is a contradiction to the will of God's revelation; to the will of his precept, and therein doth naturally tend to a superiority over God, and would usurp his omnipotence, and deprive him of his blessedness. For if God had not an infinite power to turn the designs of it to his own glory, but the

will of sin could prevail, God would be totally deprived of his blessedness. Doth not sin endeavour to subject God to the extravagant and contrary wills of men, and make him more a slave than any creature can be? For the will of no creature, not the meanest and most despicable creature, is so much crossed, as the will of God is by sin, *Isa.* 43. 24. *Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins:* thou hast endeavoured to make a mere slave of me by sin: sin endeavours to subject the blessed God to the humour and lust of every person in the world.

Proposition 6. Men sometimes in some circumstances *wish the non-existence of God.* This some think to be the meaning of the text, *the fool hath said in his heart there is no God,* that is, he wishes there were no God: Many tamper with their own hearts to bring them to a persuasion that there is no God. And when they cannot do that, they conjure up wishes that there were none. Men naturally have some conscience of sin, and some notices of justice; *Rom.* 1. 32. *They know the judgment of God,* and they know the demerit of sin; they know the judgment of God, and that *they which do such things are worthy of death.* What is the consequence of this but fear of punishment? and what is the issue of that fear, but a wishing the judge either unwilling or unable to vindicate the honour of his violated law? When God is the object of such a wish, it is is a virtual undeifying of him; not to be able to punish, is to be impotent; not to be willing to punish, is to be unjust; imperfections inconsistent with the Deity: God cannot be supposed without an infinite power to act, and an infinite righteousness as the rule of acting. Fear of God is natural to all men; not a fear of offending him, but a fear of being punished by him: the wishing the extinction of God has its degree in men, according to the degree of their fears of his just vengeance: and though such a wish be not in its meridian but in the damned in hell, yet it hath its starts and motions in affrighted and awakened consciences on the earth: under this rank of wishers that there were no God, or that God were destroyed, do fall.

I. *Terrified* consciences, that are *Magor missabib.*

see nothing but matter of fear round about. As they have lived without the bonds of the law, they are afraid to fall under the stroke of his justice: fear wishes the destruction of that which it apprehends hurtful: it considers him as a God to whom *vengeance belongs*, as the judge of all the earth.* The less hopes such a one hath of his pardon, the more joy he would have to hear that his judge should be stripped of his life: he would entertain with delight any reasons that might support him in the conceit that there were no God: in his present state such a doctrine would be his security from an account: he would as much rejoice, if there were no God to inflame an hell for him, as any guilty malefactor would if there were no judge to order a gibbet for him. Shame may bridle men's words, but the heart will be casting about for some arguments this way, to secure itself: such as are at any time in Spira's case, would be willing to cease to be creatures, that God might cease to be judge. *The fool hath said in his heart*, there is no *Elohim*, no *Judge*, fancying God without any exercise of his judicial authority. And there is not any wicked man under anguish of spirit, but, were it within the reach of his power, would take away the life of God, and rid himself of his fears, by destroying his avenger.

2. *Debauched* persons are not without such wishes sometimes: an obstinate servant wishes his master's death, from whom he expects correction for his debaucheries. As man stands in his corrupt nature, it is impossible but one time or other most debauched persons, at least have some kind of low desires, or imperfect wishes. It is as natural to men to abhor those things which are unsuitable and troublesome, as it is to please themselves in things agreeable to their minds and humours: and since man is so deeply in love with sin, as to count it the most estimable good, he cannot but wish the abolition of that law which checks it, and consequently the change of the lawgiver which enacted it; and in wishing a change in the holy nature of God he wishes a destruction of God, who could not be God, if he ceased to be immutably holy. They

* Psal. 94. 12.

do as certainly wish, that God had not a holy will to command them, as despairing souls wish, that God had not a righteous will to punish them; and to wish conscience extinct for the molestations they receive from it, is to wish the Power conscience represents out of the world also.

Since the state of sinners is a state of distance from God, and the language of sinners to God is *depart from us*, Job 21. 14. They desire as little the continuance of his being as they desire the knowledge of his ways. The same reason which moves them to desire God's distance from them, would move them to desire God's not being. Since the greatest distance would be most agreeable to them, the destruction of God must be so too, because there is no greater distance from us, than in not being. Men would rather have God not to be, than themselves under controul, that sensuality might range at pleasure; he is like a *heifer sliding from the yoke*, *Hos.* 4. 16. The cursing of God in the heart, feared by Job of his children, intimates a wishing God despoiled of his authority, that their pleasure might not be damped by his law. Besides, is there any natural man that sins against actual knowledge, but either thinks or wishes that God might not see him, that God might not know his actions? And is not this to wish the destruction of God, who could not be God unless he were immense and omniscient?

3. Under this rank fall those, who perform external duties only out of *a principle of slavish fear*. Many men perform those duties that the law enjoins with the same sentiments that slaves perform their drudgery, and are constrained in their duties by no other considerations but those of the whip and the cudgel. Since therefore they do it with reluctance, and secretly murmur while they seem to obey, they would be willing that both the command were recalled, and the master that commands them were in another world. The spirit of adoption makes men act toward God as a father, a spirit of bondage only eyes him as a Judge. Those that look upon their superiors as tyrannical, will not be much concerned

in their welfare; and would be more glad to have their power abridged, than be under perpetual fear of them.

Many men regard not the Infinite Goodness in their service of him, but consider him as cruel, tyrannical, injurious to their liberty. Adam's posterity are not free from the sentiments of their common father till they are regenerated. You know what conceit was the hammer whereby the hellish Jael struck the nail into our first parents, which conveyed death, together with the same imagination, to all their posterity, Gen. 3. 5. *God knows that in the day you eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods knowing good and evil.* Alas poor souls! God knew what he did when he forbad you that fruit: he was jealous you should be too happy: it was a cruelty in him to deprive you of a food so pleasant and delicious. The apprehension of the severity of God's commands riseth up no less in desires that there were no God over us, than Adam's apprehension of envy in God for the restraint of one tree moved him to attempt to be equal with God: fear is as powerful to produce the one in his posterity, as pride was to produce the other in the common root. When we apprehend a thing hurtful to us we desire so much evil to it, as may render it incapable of doing us the hurt we fear. As we wish the preservation of what we love or hope for; so we are naturally apt to wish the not being of that whence we fear some hurt or trouble.

We must not understand this as if any man did formally wish the destruction of God, as God. God in himself is infinite goodness and loveliness: he is infinitely good, and universally good, and nothing but good; and is therefore so agreeable to a creature as a creature, that it is impossible that the creature, while it bears itself to God as a creature, should be guilty of this, but thirst after him and cherish every motion to him. As no man wishes the destruction of any creature, as a creature, but as it may conduce to something which he counts may be beneficial to himself; so no man doth, nor perhaps can wish the cessation of the being of God, as God; for then he must wish his own being to cease also; but as he considers him

clothed with some perfections, which he apprehends as injurious to him; as his holiness in forbidding sin, his justice in punishing sin. And God being judged in those perfections contrary to what the revolted creature thinks convenient and good for himself, he may wish God stripped of those perfections, that thereby he may be free from all fear of trouble and grief from him in his fallen state. In wishing God deprived of those, he wishes God deprived of his being; because God cannot retain his Deity without a love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity; and he could not testify his love to the one, or his loathing of the other, without encouraging goodness, and witnessing his anger against iniquity.

Let us now appeal to ourselves, and examine our own consciences: Did we never please ourselves sometimes in the thoughts, how happy we should be, how free in our vain pleasures, if there were no God? Have we not desired to be our own lords without controul, subject to no law but our own, and be guided by no will but that of the flesh? Did we never rage against God under his afflicting hand? Did we never wish God stripped of his holy will to command, and his righteous will to punish, &c. Thus much for the general. For the proof of this, many considerations will bring in evidence: most of them may be reduced to these two. Man would set himself up, as *his own rule;* and as *his own end* and happiness.

That man would set himself up as his own rule instead of God: this will be evidenced in this method. 1. Man naturally disowns the rule God sets him. 2. He owns any other rule rather than that of God's prescribing. 3. These he doth in order to the setting himself up as his own rule. 4. He makes himself not only his own rule, but would make himself the rule of God, and give laws to his Creator.

First. Man *naturally disowns* the rule God sets him. It is all one to deny his royalty and to deny his being: when we disown his authority, we disown his Godhead: it is the right of God to be the Sovereign of his creatures; and it must be a very loose and trivial assent that such men have to God's superiority over them, (and conse-

quently to the excellency of his Being, upon which that authority is founded) who are scarce at ease in themselves, but when they are invading his rights, breaking his bands, casting away his cords, and contradicting his will.

Every man naturally is a son of Belial, would be without a yoke, and leap over God's inclosures; and in breaking out against his sovereignty, we disown his being as God: For to be God and Sovereign are inseparable: He could not be God, if he were not supreme; nor could he be a creator without being a law-giver. To be God and yet inferior to another, is a contradiction. To make rational creatures without prescribing them a law, is to make them without holiness, wisdom, and goodness.

(1.) There is in man *naturally an unwillingness* to have any acquaintance with the rule God sets him, *Psal.* 14. 2. *None that did understand and seek God. The refusing instruction* and *casting his word behind the back* is a part of atheism. *Psal.* 50. 17. We are heavy in hearing the instructions either of law or gospel, *Heb.* 5. 11, 12. and slow in the apprehension of what we hear. *Jer.* 4. 22. The people that God had hedged in from the wilderness of the world for his own garden, were *foolish* and did *not know God;* were *sottish* and had no understanding of him. *Hos.* 8. 12. The law of God is accounted a *strange thing;* a thing of a different climate, and a far country from the heart of man; wherewith the mind of man had no natural acquaintance, and had no desire to have any; or they regarded it as a sordid thing: What God accounts great and valuable, they account mean and despicable. Men may shew a civility to a stranger, but scarce contract an intimacy: there can be no amicable agreement between the holy will of God and the heart of a depraved creature: One is holy, the other unholy; one is universally good, the other desperately wicked, The purity of the divine rule renders it nauseous to the impurity of a carnal heart. Water and fire could as well unite as the holy will of God and the unregenerate heart of a fallen creature.

The nauseating a holy rule is an evidence of atheism in the heart, as the nauseating wholesome food is of putri-

fied phlegm in the stomach. It is found more or less in every christian, in the remainders, though not in a full empire. As there is a law in *his mind* whereby he delights in the law of God, so there is a law in *his members* whereby he wars against the law of God, *Rom.* 7. 22, 23, 25. How predominant is this loathing of the law of God, when corrupt nature is in its full strength, without any principle to controul it? There is in the mind of such a one a darkness whereby it is ignorant of it, and in the will a depravity whereby it is repugnant to it. If man were naturally willing and able to have an intimate acquaintance with, and delight in the law of God, it had not been such a signal favour for God to promise to *write the law in the heart.* A man may sooner engrave the chronicle of a whole nation, or all the records of God in the scripture upon the hardest marble with his bare finger, than write one syllable of the law of God in a spiritual manner upon his heart. For,

1. Men are negligent in using the means for the knowledge of God's will. All natural men are fools, who know not how to use the *prize God puts into their hands. Prov.* 17. 16. They put not a due estimate upon opportunities and means of grace, and account that law folly which is the birth of an infinite and holy wisdom. The knowledge of God which they may glean from creatures, and is more pleasant to the natural taste of men, is not improved to the glory of God, if we will believe the indictment the Apostle brings against the Gentiles, *Rom.* 1. 21. And most of those who have dived into the depths of nature, have been more studious of the qualities of the creatures, than of the excellency of the nature, or the discovery of the mind of God in them; who regard only the rising and motions of the star, but follow not with the wise men, its conduct to the King of the Jews. How often do we see men filled with an eager thirst for all other kind of knowledge, that cannot acquiesce in a twilight discovery, but are inquisitive into the causes and reasons of effects, yet are contented with a weak and languishing knowledge of God and his law, and are easily tired with the proposals of them?

He now that nauseates the means whereby he may come to know and obey God, has no intention to make the law of God his rule: There is no man that intends seriously an end, but he intends means in order to that end: as when a man intends the preservation or recovery of his health, he will intend means in order to those ends, otherwise he cannot be said to intend his health: so he that is not diligent in using means to know the mind of God, has no sound intention to make the will and law of God his rule. Is not the inquiry after the will of God made a work by the bye, and fain to lacquey after other concerns of an inferior nature, if it hath any place at all in the soul? which is a despising the being of God: the notion of the sovereignty of God, bears the same date with the notion of his godhead; and by the same way that he reveals himself, he reveals his authority over us; whether it be by creatures without, or conscience within. All authority over rational creatures consists in commanding and directing; the duty of rational creatures in compliance with that authority consists in obeying: where there is therefore a careless neglect of those means which convey the knowledge of God's will and our duty, there is an utter disowning of God as our sovereign and our rule.

2. When any part of the *mind and will of God breaks in upon men, they endeavour to shake it off* as a man would an officer that comes to arrest him; *they like not to retain God in their knowledge*, Rom. 1. 28. *A natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God;* that is, into his affection; he pusheth them back as men do troublesome and importunate beggars: they have no kindness to bestow upon it: they oppose the truth of God with all their powers when it presseth in upon them; and put as much contempt upon it as the Pharisees did upon the doctrine our Saviour directed against their covetousness. As men naturally delight to be without God in the world, so they delight to be without any offspring of God in their thoughts. Since the spiritual palate of man is depraved, divine truth is unsavoury and ungrateful to us, till our taste and relish is restored by

grace: hence men damp and quench the motions of their spirit to obedience and compliance with the dictates of God; strip them of their life and vigour, and kill them in the womb. How unable are our memories to retain the substance of spiritual truth; but like sand in a glass, put in at one part it runs out at the other? Have not many a secret wish, that the scripture had never mentioned some truths, or that they were blotted out of the Bible, because they face their consciences, and discourage those boiling lusts they would with eagerness and delight pursue? I think that interruption John gives our Saviour when he was upon the reproof of their pride, looks little better * than a design to divert him from a discourse so much against the grain, by telling him a story of their *prohibiting one to cast out devils*, because he followed not them. How glad are men when they can raise a battery against a command of God, and raise some smart objection whereby they may shelter themselves from the strictness of it?

3. When men cannot shake off the notices of the will and mind of God, they have *no pleasure in the consideration of them.* Which could not possibly be, if there were a real and fixed design to own the mind and law of God as our rule: subjects or servants that love to obey their prince and master, will delight to read and execute their orders. The devils understand the law of God in their minds, but they loathe the impressions of it upon their wills: those miserable spirits are bound in chains of darkness, evil habits in their wills: that they have not a thought of obeying that law they know. It was an unclean beast under the law that did not chew the cud: it is a corrupt heart, that doth not chew truth by meditation. A natural man is said not to know God, or the things of God; he may know them notionally, but he knows them not affectionately. A sensual soul can have no delight in a spiritual law. To be *sensual* and *not to have the Spirit* are inseparable, *Jude* 19.

Natural men may indeed meditate upon the law and

* Mark 9, 33, 38.

truth of God, but without delight in it: if they take any pleasure in it, it is only as it is knowledge, not as it is a rule; for we delight in nothing that we desire, but upon the same account that we desire it. Natural men desire to know God and some part of his will and law, not out of a sense of their practical excellence, but a natural thirst after knowledge: and if they have a delight, it is in the act of knowing, not in the object known, not in the duties that stream from that knowledge; they design the furnishing their understandings, not the quickening their affections; like idle boys that strike fire, not to warm themselves by the heat, but sport themselves with the sparks; whereas a gracious soul accounts not only his *meditation*, or the operations of his soul about God and his will to be *sweet*, but he hath a joy in the object of that meditation. *Psal.* 104. 34. Many have the knowledge of God, who have no delight in him or his will. Owls have eyes to perceive that there is a sun, but by reason of the weakness of their sight have no pleasure to look upon a beam of it: so neither can a man by nature love, or delight in the will of God, because of his natural corruption: That law that riseth up in men for conviction and instruction, they keep down under the power of corruption; making their souls not the sanctuary, but prison of truth, *Rom.* 1. 18. They will keep it down in their hearts, if they cannot keep it out of their heads, and will not endeavour to know and taste the spirit of it.

4. There is further, a *rising and swelling of the heart, against the will of God.*

1. *Internal.* God's law cast against a hard heart, is like a ball thrown against a stone wall, by reason of the resistance rebounding the further from it: The meeting of a divine truth and the heart of man, is like the meeting of two tides, the weaker swells and foams: We have a natural antipathy against a divine rule; and therefore when it is brought home to our consciences, there is a contempt of it, high reasonings against it, corruption breaks out more strongly: as water poured on lime sets it on fire by an antiperistasis,

and the more water is cast upon it, the more furiously it burns: or as the sun-beams shining upon a dung-hill make the steams the thicker and the stench the more noisome, neither being the positive cause of the smoke in the lime, or the stench in the dung-hill; but by accident the causes of the eruption, *Rom.* 7. 8. *But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, for without the law sin was dead.* Sin was in a languishing posture, as if it were dead; like a lazy garrison in a city, till upon an alarm from the adversary it takes arms and revives its courage; all the sin in the heart gathers together its force, to maintain its standing; like the vapours of the night, which unite themselves more closely to resist the beams of the rising sun. Deep conviction often provokes fierce opposition; sometimes disputes against a divine rule end in blasphemies, *Acts* 13. 45. Contradicting and blaspheming are coupled together.

Men naturally desire things that are forbidden, and reject things commanded, from the corruption of nature, which affects an unbounded liberty, and is impatient of returning under that yoke it hath shaken off; and therefore rageth against the bars of the law, as the waves roar against the restraint of a bank: when the understanding is dark and the mind ignorant, sin lies as dead; * a man scarce knows he hath such motions of concupiscence in him, he finds not the least breath of wind, but a full calm in his soul; but when he is awakened by the law, then the viciousness of nature being sensible of an invasion of its empire, arms itself against the divine law, and the more the command is urged, the more vigorously it bends its strength, and more insolently lifts up itself against it, he perceives more and more atheistical lusts than before; *all manner of concupiscence*, more leprous and contagious than before: when there are any motions to turn to God, a reluctance is presently perceived; atheistical thoughts bluster in the mind like the wind, they know not whence

* Thes. Salmur. De spiritu Servitutis. Thes. 19.

they come, nor whither they go: so unapt is the heart to any acknowledgment of God as his ruler, and any reunion with him. Hence men are said to *resist the Holy Ghost*, *Acts*. 7. 51. to fall against it, as the word signifies, as a stone or any ponderous body falls against that which lies in its way: they would dash to pieces or grind to powder that very motion which is made for their instruction, and the spirit too which makes it, and that not from a fit of passion, but an habitual repugnance. *Ye always resist*, &c.

2. *External;* it is a fruit of Atheism, in the fourth verse of this Psalm; *who eat up my people as they eat bread.* How do the revelations of the mind of God meet with opposition? and the carnal world like dogs bark against the shining of the moon? So much men hate the light, that they spurn at the lanthorns that bear it: and because they cannot endure the treasure, often fling the earthen vessels against the ground wherein it is held. If the entrance of truth render the market worse for Diana's shrines, the whole city will be in an uproar, *Acts* 19. 24, 28, 29. When Socrates upon natural principles confuted the heathen idolatry, and asserted the unity of God, the whole cry of Athens, a learned university, is against him; and because he opposed the public received religion, though with an undoubted truth, he must end his life by violence. How hath every corner of the world streamed with the blood of those, that would maintain the authority of God in the world! The devil's children will follow the steps of their father, and endeavour to bruise the heel of divine truth, that would endeavour to break the head of corrupt lust.

5. Men often seem desirous to be acquainted with the will of God, not out of any respect to his will and to make it their rule, *but upon some other consideration.* Truth is scarce received as truth. There is more of hypocrisy than sincerity in the pale of the church, and attendance on the mind of God. The outward dowry of a religious profession makes it often more desirable than the beauty. Judas was a follower of Christ for the bag, not out of any affection to the divine revelation: men some-

times pretend a desire to be acquainted with the will of God, to satisfy their own passions, rather than to conform to God's will: the religion of such is not the judgment of the man, but the passion of the brute. Many entertain a doctrine for the person's sake, rather than a person for the doctrine's sake; and believe a thing because it comes from a man they esteem, as if his lips were more canonical than scripture. The Apostle implies in the commendation he gives the Thessalonians, 1 *Thes.* 2. 13, that some receive the word for human interest, not *as it is in truth the word* and *will of God*, to command and govern their consciences by its sovereign authority: or else they have *the truth of God*, as James speaks of the faith of Christ, *with respect of persons*, *Jam.* 2. 2; and receive it not for the sake of the fountain, but of the channel: so that many times the same truth delivered by another, is disregarded, which, when dropping from the fancy and mouth of a man's own idol, is cried up as an oracle. This is to make not God, but man the rule: for though we entertain that which materially is the truth of God, yet not formally as his truth, but as conveyed by one we affect: and that we receive a truth and not an error, we owe the obligation to the honesty of the instrument, and not to the strength and clearness of our own judgment. Wrong considerations may give admittance to an unclean as well as a clean beast into the ark of the soul: that which is contrary to the mind of God, may be entertained, as well as that which is agreeable. It is all one to such that have no respect to God, what they have; as it is all one to a spunge to suck up the foulest water or the sweetest wine, when either is applied to it.

6. Many that entertain the notions of the will and mind of God, admit them with *unsettled and wavering affections.* There is a great levity in the heart of man. The Jews that one day applaud our Saviour with hosannahs as their king, vote his crucifixion the next, and use him as a murderer. We begin in the spirit and end in the flesh. Our hearts like lute-strings are changed with every change of weather, with every appearance of temptation; scarce one motion of God in a thousand prevails

with us for a settled abode. It is a hard task to make a signature of those truths upon our affections which will with ease pass current with our understandings: our affections will as soon loose them, as our understandings embrace them. The *heart* of man is *unstable as water*.* *Gen.* 49. 4. *Jam.* 1. 8. Some were willing to rejoice in John's light, which reflected a lustre on their minds; but not in his heat, which would have conveyed a warmth to their hearts: and the light was pleasing to them but for a season, while their corruptions lay as if they were dead, not when they were awakened. Truth may be admitted one day, and the next day rejected. As Austin saith of a wicked man, he loves the truth shining, but he hates the truth reproving. This is not to make God, but our own humour, our rule and measure.

7. Many desire an acquaintance with the law and truth of God, *with a design to improve some lust by it.* To turn the word of God to be a pander to the breach of his law. This is so far from making God's will our rule, that we make our own vile affections the rule of his law. How many forced interpretations of scripture have been coined to give content to the lusts of men; and the divine rule forced to bend and be formed to men's loose and carnal apprehensions! It is a part of the instability or falseness of the heart to wrest the scriptures to their own destruction;* which they could not do, if they did not first wring them to countenance some detestable error or filthy crime. In paradise the first interpretation made of the first law of God was diametrically opposite against the mind of the law-giver, and venomous to the whole race of mankind. Paul himself feared that some might put his doctrine of grace to so ill a use, as to be an altar and sanctuary to shelter their presumption, *Rom.* 6. 1, 15, *Shall we then continue in sin, that grace may abound?* Poisonous consequences are often drawn from the sweetest truths; as when God's patience is made a topic, whence to argue against his providence, or an encouragement to commit evil more greedily; as though because he had

* 2 Pet. 3. 16.

not presently a revenging hand, he had not an all-seeing eye; or when the doctrine of justification by faith, is made use of to depress a holy life; or God's readiness to receive returning sinners, an encouragement to defer repentance till a death bed. A liar will seek for shelter in the reward God gave the midwives that lied to Pharaoh for the preservation of the males of Israel, and Rahab's saving the spies by false intelligence. God knows how to distinguish between grace and corruption, that may lie close together; or between something of moral goodness and moral evil, which may be mixed: we find their fidelity rewarded, which was a moral good; but not their lie approved, which was a moral evil. Nor will Christ's conversing with sinners, be a plea for any to thrust themselves into evil company. Christ conversed with sinners, as a physician with diseased persons, to cure them, not approve them; others with profligate persons to receive infection from them, not to communicate holiness to them. Satan's children have studied their father's art, who wanted not perverted scripture to second his temptations against our Saviour. *Mat.* 4. 4, 6. How often do carnal hearts turn divine revelation to carnal ends, as the sea, fresh water into salt? As men subject the precepts of God to carnal interests, so they subject the truths of God to carnal fancies. When men will allegorize the word, and make a humorous and crazy fancy the interpreter of divine oracles, and not the spirit speaking in the word; this is to enthrone our own imaginations as the rule of God's law, and depose his law from being the rule of our reason: this is to rifle truth of its true mind and intent. It is more to rob a man of his reason, the essential constitutive part of man, than of his estate. This is to refuse an intimate acquaintance with his will. We shall never tell what is the matter of a precept, or the matter of a promise, if we impose a sense upon it contrary to the plain meaning of it: thereby we shall make the law of God to have a distinct sense according to the variety of men's imaginations, and so make every man's fancy a law to himself.

Now that this unwillingness to have a spiritual acquaintance with divine truth, is a disowning God as our

rule, and a setting up self in his stead, is evident; because this unwillingness respects truth. 1. As it is most *spiritual and holy.* A fleshly mind is most contrary to a spiritual law, and particularly as it is a searching and discovering law, that would dethrone all other rules in the soul. As men love to be without a holy God in the world, so they love to be without a holy law, the transcript and image of God's holiness in their hearts; and without holy men, the lights kindled by the Father of lights. As the holiness of God, so the holiness of the law, most offends a carnal heart, *Isa.* 30. 11. *Cause the holy one of Israel to cease from before us, prophecy to us right things:* they could not endure God as a holy one. Herein God places their rebellion, rejecting him as their rule, *ver.* 9. *Rebellious children that will not hear the law of the Lord.* The more pure and precious any discovery of God is, the more it is disrelished by the world: as spiritual sins are sweetest to a carnal heart, so spiritual truths are most distasteful. The more of the brightness of the sun any beam conveys, the more offensive it is to a distempered eye.

2. As it most *relates to, or leads to God.* The devil directs his fiercest batteries against those doctrines in the word, and those graces in the heart, which most exalt God, debase man, and bring men to the lowest subjection to their Creator; such is the doctrine and grace of justifying faith. That men hate not knowledge as knowledge, but as it directs them to choose the fear of the Lord, was the determination of the Holy Ghost long ago. *Prov.* 1. 29. *for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord.*

Whatsoever respects God, clears up guilt, witnesses man's revolt to him, rouseth up conscience, and moves to a return to God, a man naturally runs from, as Adam did from God, and seeks a shelter in some weak bushes of error, rather than appear before it. Not that men are unwilling to enquire into and contemplate some divine truths, which lie furthest from the heart, and concern not themselves immediately with the rectifying the soul: they may view them with such a pleasure as some might take

in beholding the miracles of our Saviour, who could not endure his searching doctrine. The light of speculation may be pleasant, but the light of conviction is grievous; that which galls their consciences, and would affect them with a sense of their duty to God. Is it not easy to perceive, that when a man begins to be serious in the concerns of the honour of God and the duty of his soul, he feels a reluctancy within him, even against the pleas of conscience; which evidenceth that some unworthy principle has got footing in the hearts of men which fights against the declarations of God without, and the impressions of the law of God within, at the same time when a man's own conscience takes part with it, which is the substance of the apostle's discourse, *Rom.* 7, 15, 16, &c. Close discourses of the honour of God, and our duty to him, are irksome, when men are upon a merry pin: they are like a damp in a mine that takes away their breath; they shuffle them out as soon as they can, and are as unwilling to retain the speech of them in their mouths, as the knowledge of them in their hearts. Gracious speeches, instead of bettering many men, distemper them, as sometimes sweet perfumes affect a weak head with aches.

3. As it is most *contrary to self.* Men are unwilling to acquaint themselves with any truth that leads to God, because it leads from self. Every part of the will of God, is more or less displeasing, as it sounds harsh against some carnal interest men would set above God, or as a mate with him. Man cannot desire any intimacy with that law which he regards as a bird of prey, to pick out his right eye, or gnaw off his right hand, his lust dearer than himself. The reason we have such hard thoughts of God's will, is because we have such high thoughts of ourselves. It is a hard matter to believe or will that which hath no affinity with some principle in the understanding, and no interest in our will and passions. Our unwillingness to be acquainted with the will of God arises from the disproportion between that and our corrupt hearts, *We are alienated from the life of God in our minds, Eph.* 4. 18, 19. As we live not like God, so we

neither think or will as God. There is an antipathy in the heart of man against that doctrine, which teaches us to deny ourselves, and be under the rule of another; but whatsoever favours the ambition, lusts, and profits of men, is easily entertainable.

Many are fond of those sciences, which may enrich their understandings, and grate not upon their sensual delights. Many have an admirable dexterity in finding out philosophical reasons, mathematical demonstrations, or raising observations upon the records of history, and spend much time and many serious and affectionate thoughts in the study of them. In those they have not immediately to do with God, their beloved pleasures are not impaired: it is a satisfaction to *self* without the exercise of any hostility against it. But had those sciences been against *self*, as much as the law and will of God, they had long since been rooted out of the world. Why did the young man turn his back upon the law of Christ? Because of his worldly *self*. Why did the Pharisees mock at the doctrine of our Saviour and not at their own traditions? Because of covetous *self*. Why did the Jews slight the person of our Saviour and put him to death, after the reading so many credentials of his being sent from heaven? Because of ambitious *self*, that the Romans might not come and take away their kingdom. If the law of God were fitted to the humours of *self*, it would be readily and cordially observed by all men; *self* is the measure of a world of seeming religious actions; while God seems to be the object, and his law the motive, *self* is the rule and end; *Zach.* 7. 5. *Did you fast unto me*, &c.

PART II.

PRACTICAL ATHEISM POURS CONTEMPT UPON GOD.

How this contempt is discovered—Breaking the law—Aversion to the will of God---Openly slighting the will of God—Slighting his will at any risk or expense—Alienation of mind in his service—Deserting his service—Breaking promises with God—Men naturally opposed to the law of God—Voluntary subjection to Satan—Opinions of the world preferred to the precepts of God—Preferred when contrary to the will of God—Man will be a law to himself—This is natural to man, as he is corrupted—Good actions performed from selfish principles—Neglecting to take counsel of God in great emergencies.

(2.) AS men discover their disowning the will of God as a rule, by unwillingness to be acquainted with it, so they discover it by the *contempt of it*, after they *cannot avoid the notions and some impressions of it.* The rule of God is burdensome to a sinner, he flies from it as from a frightful bugbear, and unpleasant yoke: sin against the knowledge of the law is therefore called, *a going back from the commandments of God's lips, Job* 23. 12. *A casting God's word behind them, Psal.* 50. 17. as a contemptible thing, fitter to be trodden in the dirt, than lodged in the heart: nay it is a casting it off as an abominable thing, for so the word נזח signifies, *Hos.* 8. 3. *Israel hath cast off the thing that is good;* an utter refusal of God, *Jer.* 44. 16. *As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken.* In the

disowning his will as a rule, we disown all those attributes which flow from his will, as goodness, righteousness, and truth. As an act of the divine understanding is supposed to precede the act of the divine will, so we slight the infinite reason of God. Every law, though it proceeds from the will of the law-giver, and doth formally consist in an act of the will, yet it doth presuppose an act of the understanding. If *the commandment be holy, just, and good*, as it is *Rom.* 7. 12. If it be the image of God's holiness, a transcript of his righteousness, and the efflux of his goodness; then, in every breach of it, dishonour is cast upon those attributes which shine in it, and a slight of all the regards he hath to his own honour, and all the provisions he makes for his creatures. This atheism or contempt of God, is more taken notice of by God than the matter of the sin itself; as a respect to God in a weak and imperfect obedience is more than the matter of the obedience itself, because it is an acknowledgment of God; so a contempt of God in an act of disobedience, is more than the matter of disobedience. The creature stands in such an act not only in a posture of distance from God, but defiance of him! It was not the bare act of murder and adultery which Nathan charged upon David, but the atheistical principle which spirited those evil acts; the *despising the commandment of the Lord*, was the venom of them, 2 *Sam.* 12. 9, 10. It is possible to break a law without contempt; but when men pretend to believe there is a God, and that this is the law of God, it shews a contempt of his majesty: men naturally account God's laws too strict, his yoke too heavy, and his limits too strait: and he that liveth in a contempt of this law, curseth God in his life. How can they believe there is a God, who despise him as a ruler? How can they believe him to be a guide, that disdain to follow him? To think we firmly believe a God, without living conformable to his law, is an idle and vain imagination. The true and sensible motion of a God cannot subsist with disorder and an affected unrighteousness. This contempt is seen,

1. In any *presumptuous breach* of any part of his law. Such sins are frequently called in scripture *rebellions*,

which are a denial of the allegiance we owe to him. By a wilful refusal of his right in one part we root up the foundation of that rule he doth justly challenge over us: His right is as extensive to command us in one thing, as in another: And if it be disowned in one thing, it is virtually disowned in all, and the whole statute book of God is contemned, *Jam.* 2. 10, 11. *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point is guilty of all.* A willing breaking one part, though there be a willing observance of all the other points of it, is a breach of the whole, because the authority of God, which gives sanction to the whole, is slighted. The obedience to the rest is dissembled: For the love, which is the root of all obedience, is wanting; *for love is the fulfilling the whole law. Rom.* 13. 10. The rest are obeyed because they cross not carnal desire so much as the other, and so it is an observance of himself, not of God. Besides, the authority of God, which is not prevalent to restrain us from the breach of one point, would be of as little force with us to restrain us from the breach of all the rest, did the allurements of the flesh give us as strong a diversion from the one, as from the other: And though the command that is transgressed be the least in the whole law, yet the authority which enjoins it is the same with that which enacts the greatest. And it is not so much the matter of the command, as the authority commanding, which lays the obligation.

2. In *the natural averseness* to the declarations of God's will and mind, which way soever they tend. Since man affected to be as God, he desires to be boundless; he would not have fetters, though they be golden ones, and conduce to his happiness; though the law of God be a strength to them, yet they will not, *Isa.* 30. 15. *In returning shall be your strength and you would not.* They would not have a bridle to restrain them from running into the pit, nor be hedged in by the law, though for their security: As if they thought it too slavish and low spirited a thing to be guided by the will of another: Hence man is compared to a *wild ass*, that loves to *snuff up the wind in the wil-*

derness at her pleasure, rather than come under the guidance of God; *Jer.* 2. 24. From whatsoever quarter of the heavens you pursue her she will run to the other.

The Israelites *could not endure what was commanded, Heb.* 12. 20, though in regard of the moral part, agreeable to what they found written in their own nature; and to the observance whereof, they had the highest obligations of any people under heaven, since God had by many prodigies delivered them from a cruel slavery: the memory of which prefaced the Decalogue; *Exod.* 20. 2. *I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage:* They could not think of the rule of their duty, but they must reflect upon the grand incentive of it in their redemption from Egyptian thraldom: yet this people were a cross to God, which way soever he moved: When they were in the brick-kilns, they cried for deliverance; when they had heavenly manna, they longed for their onions and garlic. In *Num.* 14. 3, 25, 28, they repent of their deliverance from Egypt, and talk of *returning again* to seek the remedy of their evils in the hands of their cruellest enemies; and would rather put themselves into the irons, whence God had delivered them, than believe one word of the promise of God for giving them a fruitful land: but when Moses tells them God's order, that they should turn back by the way of the Red Sea, and that God had confirmed it by an oath, that they should not see the land of Canaan: they then run cross to this command of God, and instead of marching towards the Red Sea, which they had wished for before, they will go up to Canaan, as in spite of God and his threatening. *We will go to the place which the Lord hath promised, ver.* 40. which *Moses* calls a *transgressing the commandment of the Lord*, ver. 41. They would presume to go up, notwithstanding Moses's prohibition, and are smitten by the Amalekites: When God gives them a precept, with a promise to go up to Canaan, they long for Egypt; when God commands them to return to the Red-Sea, which was nearer to the place they long-

ed for; they will shift sides and go up to Canaan, *Numb.* 21. 4, 5. * And when they found they were to traverse the solitudes of the desert, they murmured against God, and instead of thanking him for the late victory against the Canaanites, they reproach him for his conduct from Egypt, and the manna wherewith he nourished them in the wilderness. They would not go to Canaan, the way God had chosen, nor preserve themselves by the means God had ordained. They would not be at God's disposal, but complain of the badness of the way, and the lightness of manna, empty of any necessary juice to sustain their nature. They murmuringly solicit the will and power of God to change all that order which he had resolved in his council, and take another, conformable to their vain foolish desires; and they signified thereby that they would invade his conduct, and that he should act according to their fancy; which the Psalmist calls a *tempting of God, and limiting the Holy One of Israel, Psal.* 78. 41.

To what point soever the declarations of God stand, the will of man turns the quite contrary way. Is not the carriage of this nation, the best then in the world? A discovery of the depth of our natural corruption, how cross man is to God; and that charge God brings against them, may be brought against all men by nature, that they *despise his judgments*, and have a rooted abhorrence of his statutes in their soul, *Levit.* 26. 43. No sooner had they recovered from one rebellion but they revolted to another; so difficult a thing it is for man's nature to be rendered capable of conforming to the will of God. The carriage of his people is but a copy of the nature of mankind, and is *written for our admonition*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 11. From this temper, men are said to make *void the law of God, Psal.* 119. 126. to make it of no obligation, an antiquated and moth-eaten record. And the Pharisees by setting up their traditions against the will of God, are said to make his law of *none effect*, to strip it of all its *authority*, as the word signifies, *Mat.* 15. 6. ἠκυρώσατε.

3. We have *the greatest slight of that will of God* which

* Daillé Serm. 1 Cor. 10. Ser. 9. p. 234, 235. 40.

is most for his honour and his greatest pleasure. It is the nature of man, ever since Adam, to do so, *Hos.* 6. 6, 7. *God desired mercy and not sacrifice, the knowledge of himself more than burnt offering; but they like men, as Adam, have transgressed the covenant,* invade God's rights, and not let him be Lord of one tree. We are more curious observers of the fringes of the law, than of the greater concerns of it. The Jews were diligent in sacrifices and offerings, which God did not urge upon them as principals, but as types of other things; but negligent of the faith which was to be established by him. Holiness, mercy, piety, which concerned the honour of God, as governor of the world, and were imitations of the holiness and goodness of God, they were *strangers to.* This is God's complaint, *Isa.* 1. 11, 12. and 16. 17.

We shall find our hearts most averse to the observation of those laws which are eternal, and essential to righteousness; such that he could not but command, as he is a righteous governor; in the observation of which, we come nearest to him, and express his image more clearly: as those laws for an inward and spiritual worship, a supreme affection to him. God, in regard of his righteousness and holiness of his nature, and the excellency of his being, could not command the contrary to these: but this part of his will our hearts most swell against, our corruption doth most snarl at; whereas those laws which are only positive and have no intrinsic righteousness in them, but depend purely upon the will of the law-giver, and may be changed at his pleasure, which the other, that have an intrinsic righteousness in them, cannot, we better comply with, than that part of his will that doth express more the righteousness of his nature; such as the ceremonial part of worship, and the ceremonial law among the Jews. *Psal.* 50. 6, 17, 19. We are more willing to observe order in some outward attendances and hypocritical devotions, than discard secret affections to evil, crucify inward lusts and delightful thoughts: A *hanging down the head like a bulrush* is not difficult, but the *breaking the heart,* like a potter's vessel, to shreds and dust, (a sacrifice God delights in,

whereby the excellency of God and the vileness of the creature is owned) goes against the grain: to cut off an outward branch is not so hard, as to hack at the root. What God most loathes, as most contrary to his will, we most love: no sin did God so severely hate, and no sin were the Jews more inclined unto, than that of idolatry. The heathen had not changed their God, as the Jews had *changed their glory, Jer.* 2. 11. And all men are naturally tainted with this sin, which is so contrary to the holy and excellent nature of God: by how much the more defect there is of purity in our respects to God, by so much the more respect there is to some idol within or without us, to humour, custom, and interest, &c.

Never did any law of God meet with so much opposition as Christianity, which was the design of God from the first promise to the exhibiting the Redeemer, and from thence to the end of the world. All people drew swords at first against it: The Romans prepared yokes for their neighbours, but provided temples for the idols those people worshipped. But Christianity, the choicest design and most delightful part of the will of God, never met with a kind entertainment at first in any place: Rome, that entertained all others, persecuted this with fire and sword, though sealed by greater testimonies from heaven, than their own records could report in favour of their idols.

4. In running the *greatest hazards*, and exposing ourselves *to more trouble to cross* the will of God, than is necessary to the observance of it. It is a vain charge men bring against the divine precepts, that they are rigorous, severe, difficult: when, besides the contradiction to our Saviour, who tells us his *yoke is easy*, and his *burden light*, they thwart their own calm reason and judgment. Is there not more difficulty to be vicious, covetous, violent, cruel, than to be virtuous, charitable, kind? Doth the will of God enjoin that, that is not conformable to right reason, and secretly delightful in the exercise and issue? And on the contrary what doth Satan and the world engage us in, that

is not full of molestation and hazard? Is it a sweet and comely thing to combat continually against our own consciences, and resist our own light, and commence a perpetual quarrel against ourselves, as we ordinarily do when we sin? They in the prophet, *Mich.* 6. 6, 7, 8. would be at the expence of *thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil*, if they could compass them; yea, would strip themselves of their natural affection to their first-born to expiate the *sin of their soul*, rather than to *do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God;* things more conducible to the honour of God, the welfare of the world, the security of their souls, and of a more easy practice than the offerings they wished for. Do not men then disown God when they will walk in ways hedged with thorns, wherein they meet with the arrows of conscience at every turn in their sides, and slide down to an everlasting punishment, sink under an intolerable slavery to contradict the will of God? When they will prefer a sensual satisfaction, with a tempest in their consciences, violation of their reasons, gnawing cares and weary travels, before the honour of God, the dignity of their natures, the happiness of peace and health, which might be preserved at a cheaper rate, than they are at to destroy them?

5. In the *unwillingness and awkwardness of the heart*, when it is to pay God a service. *Mich.* 7. 3. Men *do evil with both hands earnestly*, but do good with one hand faintly; no life in the heart, nor any diligence in the hand. What slight and loose thoughts of God doth this unwillingness imply? It is a wrong to his providence, as though we were not under his government, and had no need of his assistance. A wrong to his excellency, as though there were no amiableness in him to make his service desirable. An injury to his goodness and power, as if he were not able or willing to reward the creature's obedience, or careless, not to take notice of it. It is a sign we receive little satisfaction in him, and that there is a great unsuitableness between him and us.

There is a kind of *constraint in the first engage-*

ment. We are rather pressed to it than enter ourselves volunteers. What we call service to God, is done naturally much against our wills; it is not a delightful food, but a bitter portion; we are rather hauled, than run to it. There is a contradiction of sin within us against our service, as there was a contradiction of sinners without our Saviour against his doing the will of God. Our hearts are unwieldy to any spiritual service of God; we are fain to use a violence with them sometimes. *Hezekiah*, it is said, *walked before the Lord with a perfect heart; 2 Kings* 20. 9. he walked, he made himself to walk. Man naturally cares not for a walk with God: if he hath any communion with him, it is with such a dulness and heaviness of spirit, as if he wished himself out of his company. Man's nature, being contrary to holiness, hath an aversion to any act of homage to God; because holiness must at least be pretended. In every duty wherein we have a communion with God, holiness is requisite: now as men are against the truth of holiness, because it is unsuitable to them, so they are not friends to those duties which require it, and for some space divert them from the thoughts of their beloved lusts. The word of the Lord is a yoke, prayer a drudgery, obedience a strange element. We are like fish, that *drink up iniquity like water*, and come not to the bank without the force of an angle: no more willing to do service for God, than a fish is of itself to do service for man. It is a constrained act to satisfy conscience, and such are servile, not son-like performances, and spring from bondage more than affection: if conscience, like a task master, did not scourge them to duty, they would never perform it.

Let us appeal to ourselves, whether we are not more unwilling to secret, closet, hearty duty to God, than to join with others in some external service; as if those inward services, were a going to the rack, and rather our penance than privilege. How much service hath God in the world from the same principle that vagrants perform their task in Bridewell? How glad are many of evasions to back them in the neglect of the commands of

God, of corrupt reasonings from the flesh to way-lay an act of obedience, and a multitude of excuses to blunt the edge of the precept? The very service of God shall be a pretence to deprive him of the obedience due to him. *Saul* will not be ruled by God's will in the destroying the cattle of the *Amalekites*, but by his own; and will impose upon the will and wisdom of God, judging God mistaken in his command, and that the cattle God thought fittest to be *meat to the fowls*, were fitter to be *sacrifices* on the altar. 1 *Sam.* 15. 3, 9, 15, 21. If we do perform any part of his will, is it not for our own ends to have some deliverance from trouble? *Isa.* 26. 16. *In trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer, when thy chastening was upon them.* In affliction he shall find them kneeling in homage and devotion. In prosperity, he shall feel them kicking with contempt; they can *pour* out a prayer in distress, and scarce *drop* one when they are delivered.

There is a *slightness in our service of God.* We are loath to come into his presence, and when we do come, we are loath to continue with him. We pay not an homage to him heartily, as to our Lord and governor; we regard him not as our master, whose work we ought to do, and whose honour we ought to aim at:—1. In regard of *the matter of service. Mal.* 1. 13, 14. When the *torn*, the *lame*, and the *sick* is offered to God; so thin and lean a sacrifice, that you might have thrown it to the ground with a puff, so some understand the meaning of you have snuffed at it. Men have naturally such slight thoughts of the majesty and law of God, that they think any service is good enough for him, and conformable to his law. The dullest and deadest times we think fittest to pay God a service in; when sleep is ready to close our eyes and we are unfit to serve ourselves, we think it a fit time to open our hearts to God. How few *morning sacrifices* hath God from many persons and families? Men leap out of their beds to their carnal pleasures or worldly employments, without any thought of their Creator and preserver, or any reflection upon his will as the rule of our daily obedience. And as many

reserve the dregs of their lives, their old age, to offer up their souls to God: so they reserve the dregs of the day, their sleeping time, for the offering up their service to him: how many grudge to spend their best time in the serving the will of God, and reserve for him the sickly and rheumatic part of their lives; the remainder of that which the devil and their own lusts have fed upon? Would not any prince or governor judge a present half eaten up by wild beasts, or that which died in a ditch, a contempt of his royalty? a corrupt thing is too base and vile for so great a king as God is, whose name is *dreadful. Mal.* 1. 24. When by age men are weary of their own bodies, they would present them to God; yet grudgingly, as if a tired body were too good for him, snuffing at the command for service. God calls for our best, and we give him the worst. 2. In respect of *Frame.* We think any frame will serve God's turn, which speaks our slight of God as a *ruler.* Man naturally performs duty with an unholy heart, whereby it becomes an abomination to God, *Prov.* 28. 9. *He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayers shall be an abomination to God.* The services which he commands, he hates for their evil frames or corrupt ends, *Amos* 5. 21. *I hate, I despise your feast-days, I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.* God requires gracious services, and we give him corrupt ones. We do not rouse up our hearts, as *David* called upon his *lute* and *harp to awake, Psal.* 57. 8. Our hearts are not given to him, we put him off with bodily exercise: the heart is but ice to what it doth not affect.

1. There is not that natural vigour in the observance of God, which we have in worldly business. When we see a liveliness in men in other things, change the scene into a motion towards God, how suddenly doth their vigour shrink and their hearts freeze into sluggishness? Many times we serve God as languishingly as if we were afraid he should accept us, and pray as coldly as if we were unwilling he should hear us, and take away that lust by which we are governed, and which conscience forces us to pray against; as if we were afraid God should set up his own throne and government in our hearts. How

fleeting are we in divine meditation, how sleepy in spiritual exercises, but in other exercises active? The soul doth not awaken itself, and excite those animal and vital spirits, which it will in bodily recreations and sports, much less the powers of the soul; whereby it is evident we prefer the latter before any service to God. Since there is a fulness of animal spirits, why might they not be excited in holy duties as well as in other operations, but that there is a reluctancy in the soul to exercise its supremacy in this case, and perform any thing becoming a creature in subjection to God as a ruler?

2. It is evident also in the *distractions we have in his service.* How loath are we to serve God fixedly one hour, nay a part of an hour, notwithstanding all the thoughts of his Majesty, and the eternity of glory set before our eye? What man is there since the fall of Adam, that served God one hour without many wanderings and unsuitable thoughts unfit for that service? How ready are our hearts to start out and unite themselves with any worldly objects that please us?

3. *Weariness* in it evidenceth it. To be weary of our dulness signifies a desire; to be weary of service signifies a discontent to be ruled by God. How tired are we in the performance of spiritual duties, when in the vain triflings of time we have a perpetual motion: How will many willingly revel whole nights, when their hearts will flag at the threshold of a religious service? Like *Dagon*, we lose both our heads to think, and hands to act, when the ark of God is present, 1 *Sam.* 5. 4. Some in the *Prophet* wished the *new moon* and the *sabbath over*, that they might sell their corn, and be busied again in their worldly affairs, *Amos* 8. 5. A slight and weariness of the sabbath, was a slight of the Lord of the sabbath, and of that freedom from the yoke and rule of sin, which was signified by it. The design of the sacrifices in the new moon was to signify a rest from the tyranny of sin, and a consecration to the spiritual service of God. Servants that are quickly weary of their work, are weary of the authority of their master that enjoins it: If our hearts had a value for God, it would be with us as with the needle to

the loadstone; there would be upon his beck a speedy motion to him, and a fixed union with him. When the judgments and affections of the saints shall be fully refined in glory, they shall be willing to behold the face of God and be under his government to eternity, without any weariness: as the holy angels have owned God as their sovereign near these six thousand years, without being weary of running on his errands. But alas, while the flesh clogs us, there will be some reliques of unwillingness to hear his injunctions, and weariness in performing them; though men may excuse those things by extrinsic causes, yet God's unerring judgment calls it a weariness of himself, *Isa.* 43. 22. *Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.* Of this he taxeth his own people, when he tells them he would have the beasts of the field; the *Dragons* and the *Owls*, the *Gentiles*, that the Jews counted no better than such, to honour him and acknowledge him their rule in a way of duty, *ver.* 20, 21.

6. This contempt is seen in a *deserting the rule of God*, when our expectations are not answered upon our service. When services are performed from carnal principles, they are soon cast off when carnal ends meet not with desired satisfaction. But when we own ourselves God's servants, and God our master, *our eyes will wait upon him till he have mercy on us, Psal.* 123. 2. It is one part of the duty we owe to God as *our master* in heaven, *to continue in prayer*, *Col.* 4. 1, 2; and by the same reason in all other service, and to watch in the same with thanksgiving. To watch for occasions of praise, to watch with chearfulness for further manifestations of his will, strength to perform it, success in the performance, that we may from all draw matter of praise; as we are in a posture of obedience to his precepts, so we should be in a posture of waiting for the blessing of it. But naturally we reject the duty we owe to God, if he do not speed the blessing we expect from him. How many do secretly mutter the same as they in *Job.* 21. 15. *What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray to him?* They serve not God out of conscience to

his commands, but for some carnal profit; and if God make them to wait for it, they will not stay his leisure, but cease soliciting him any longer. Two things are expressed that God was not worthy of any homage from them. *What is the Almighty that we should serve him?* and that the service of him would not bring them in a good revenue, or an advantage of that kind they expected. Interest drives many men on to some kind of service, and when they do not find an advance of that, they will acknowledge God no more, but like some beggars, if you give them not upon their asking, and calling you good master, from blessing they will turn to cursing.

How often do men do that secretly, practically, if not plainly, which Job's wife advised him to, curse God, and cast off that disguise of integrity they had assumed? *Job 2. 9. Dost thou still retain thy integrity? Curse God.* What a stir, and puling, and crying is here? Cast off all thoughts of religious service, and be at daggers drawing with that God, who for all thy service of him has made thee so wretched a spectacle to men, and a banquet for worms. The like temper is deciphered in the Jews, *Mal. 3. 14. It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinances, that we have walked mournfully before the Lord?* What profit is it that we have regarded his statutes, and carried ourselves in a way of subjection to God, as our sovereign, when we inherit nothing but sorrow, and the idolatrous neighbours swim in all kind of pleasures, as if it were the most miserable thing to acknowledge God? If men have not the benefits they expect, they think God unrighteous in himself, and injurious to them, in not conferring the favour they imagine they have merited; and if they have not that recompence they will deny God that subjection they owe to him as creatures. Grace moves to God upon a sense of duty; corrupt nature upon a sense of interest. Sincerity is encouraged by gracious returns, but is not melted away by God's delay or refusal; corrupt nature would have God at its beck, and steers a course of duty by hope of some carnal profit, not by a sense of the sovereignty of God.

7. This contempt is seen in *breaking promises with God.**

* Reyn.

"One while the conscience of man makes vows of new obedience, and perhaps binds himself with many an oath, but they prove like Jonah's gourd, withering the next day after their birth. This was Pharaoh's temper; under a storm he would submit to God, and let Israel go; but when the storm is ended, he will not be under God's controul, and Israel's slavery shall be increased. The fear of divine wrath makes many a sinner turn his back upon his sin, and the love of his ruling lust makes him turn his back upon his true Lord. This is from the prevalency of sin, that disputes with God for the sovereignty." When God hath sent a sharp disease, as a messenger to bind men to their beds, and make an interruption of their sinful pleasures, their mouths are full of promises of a new life, in hope to escape the just vengeance of God. The sense of hell which strikes strongly upon them, makes them full of such pretended resolutions when they howl upon their beds. But if God be pleased in his patience to give them a respite, to take off the chains wherewith he seemed to be binding them for destruction, and recruit their strength, they are more earnest in their sins than they were in their promises of a reformation; as if they had got the mastery of God, and had outwitted him. How *often* doth God charge them *of not returning to him after a succession of judgments?* *Amos* 4. 6. to ver. 11. So hard it is, not only to allure, but to scourge men to an acknowledgment of God as their ruler. Consider then,

Are we not naturally inclined to disobey the known will of God? Can we say, Lord, for thy sake we refrain the thing to which our hearts incline? Do we not allow ourselves to be licentious, earthly, vain, proud, revengeful, though we know it will offend him? Have we not been peevishly cross to his declared will? run counter to him and those laws which express most of the glory of his holiness? Is not this to disown him as our rule? Did we never wish there were no law to bind us, no precept to check our idols? What is this, but to wish that God would depose himself from being our Governor, and leave us to our own conduct?

or else to wish that he were as unholy as ourselves, as careless of his own laws as we are, that is, that he were no more a God than we, a God as sinful and unrighteous as ourselves? He whose heart riseth against the law of God to unlaw it, riseth against the author of that law to undeify him. He that casts contempt upon the dearest thing God hath in the world, that which is the image of his holiness, the delight of his soul; that which he hath given a special charge to maintain, and that because it is holy, just, and good; would not stick to rejoice at the destruction of God himself. If God's holiness and righteousness in the beam be despised, much more will an immense goodness and holiness in the fountain be rejected: he that wisheth a beam far from his eyes, because it offends and scorcheth him, can be no friend to the sun, from whence that beam doth issue. How unworthy a creature is man, since he only, a rational creature, is the sole being that withdraws itself from the rule of God in this earth? And how miserable a creature is he also, since departing from the order of God's goodness, he falls into the order of his justice; and while he refuseth God to be the rule of his life, he cannot avoid him being the judge of his punishment? It is this is the original of all sin, and the fountain of all our misery.

Having considered the first point, that man disowns the rule which God sets him, we go on to the second, That *man naturally owns any other rule* rather than that of God's prescribing. The law of God orders one thing, the heart of man desires another. There is not the basest thing in the world, but man would sooner submit to be guided by it, rather than by the holiness of God; and when any thing that God commands crosses our own wills, we value it no more, than we would the advice of a poor despicable beggar. How many are *lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God;* 2 *Tim.* 3. 4. To make something which contributes to the perfection of nature, as learning, wisdom, moral virtues, our rule, would be more tolerable: but to pay that homage to a beastly pleasure, which is the right of God,

is an inexcusable contempt of him. The greatest excellency in the world is infinitely below God; much more a bestial delight, which is both disgraceful and below the nature of man. If we made the vilest creature on earth our idol, it is more excusable than to be the slave of a brutish pleasure. The viler the thing is that doth possess the throne in our heart, the greater contempt it is of him who can only claim a right to it and is worthy of it. Sin is the first object of man's election, as soon as the faculty whereby he chooses comes to exercise its power: and it is so dear to man, that it is, in the estimate of our Saviour, counted as the right hand and the right eye, dear, precious, and useful members.

1. *The rule of Satan is owned* before the rule of God. The natural man would rather be under the guidance of Satan than the yoke of his Creator. Adam chose him to be his governor in Paradise. No sooner had Satan spoke of God in a way of derision, *Gen.* 3. 1, 5, *Yea, hath God said;* but man follows his counsel and approves of the scoff; and the greatest part of his posterity have not been wiser by his fall, but would rather ramble in the devil's wilderness, than stay in God's fold. It is by the sin of man that the devil is become the God of the world, as if men were electors of him to the government: sin is an election of him for a Lord, and a putting the soul under his government. Those that live according to the course of the world, and are loath to displease it, are under the government of the prince of it. The greatest part of the works done in the world is to enlarge the kingdom of Satan. For how many ages were the laws whereby the greatest part of the world was governed in the affairs of religion, the fruits of his usurpation and policy? When temples were erected to him, priests consecrated to his service; the rites used in most of the worship of the world were either of his own coining, or the misapplying the rites God had ordained to himself, under the notion of a God: whence the apostle calls all idolatrous feasts, 1 *Cor.* 10. 20, 21, *the table of*

devils, the cup of devils, sacrifice to devils, fellowship with devils. Devils being the real object of the pagan worship, though not formally intended by the worshipper; though in some parts of the Indies, the direct and peculiar worship is to the devil, that he might not hurt them. And though the intention of others was to offer to God, and not the devil, yet since the action was contrary to the will of God, he regards it as a sacrifice to devils.

It was not the intention of Jeroboam to establish priests to the devil, when he consecrated them to the service of his calves, for Jehu afterwards calls them *the servants of the Lord*, 2 *Kings*, 10. 23, *See if there be here none of the servants of the Lord*, to distinguish them from the servants of Baal, signifying that the true God was worshipped under those images, and not Baal, nor any of the gods of the heathens; yet scripture couples the calves and devils together, and ascribes the worship given to one, to be given to the other. 2 *Chron.* 11. 15. *He ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made;* so that they were sacrifices to devils, notwithstanding the intention of Jeroboam and his subjects that had set up and worshipped them, because they were contrary to the mind of God, and agreeable to the doctrine and mind of Satan, though the object of their worship in their own intention were not the devil but some deified man or some canonized saint. The intention makes not a good action: if so, when men *kill* the best servants of God with a design to do *God service*, as our Saviour foretels, *John* 16. 2, the action would not be murder; yet who can call it otherwise, since God is wronged in the persons of his servants? since most of the worship of the world, which men's corrupt nature inclines them to, is false and different from the revealed will of God, it is a practical acknowledgment of the devil, as the governor, by acknowledging and practising those doctrines, which have not the stamp of divine revelation upon them, but were minted by Satan to depress the honour of God in the world: It doth

concern men then to take good heed, that in their acts of worship they have a divine rule; otherwise it is an owning the devil as the rule; for there is no medium: whatsoever is not from God, is from Satan.

But to bring this closer to us, and consider that which is more common among us: men that are in a natural condition and wedded to their lusts, are under the paternal government of Satan, *John* 8. 44. *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.* If we divide sin into spiritual and carnal, which division comprehends all, the devil's authority is owned in both: in spiritual, we conform to his example, because those he commits; in carnal, we obey his will, because those he directs: he acts the one, and sets us a copy; he tempts to the other, and gives us a kind of a precept. Thus man by nature being a willing servant of sin, is more desirous to be bound in the devil's iron chains, than in God's silken cords. What greater atheism can there be, than to use God as if he were inferior to the devil? to take the part of his greatest enemy, who drew all others into the faction against him? to please Satan by offending God, and gratify our adversary with the injury of our Creator? For a subject to take arms against his prince with the deadliest enemy, both himself and prince hath in the whole world, adds a greater blackness to the rebellion.

2. The more visible rule preferred before God in the world, *is man.* The opinion of the world is more our rule than the precept of God; and many men's abstinence from sin, is not from a sense of the divine will, no, nor from a principle of reason, but from an affection to some man on whom they depend, or fear of punishment from a superior: the same principle with that in a ravenous beast, who abstains from what he desires for fear only of a stick or club: men will walk with the herds, go in fashion with the most, speak and act as the most do: while we conform to the world, we cannot perform a reasonable service to God, nor prove, nor approve practically, what the good and acceptable will of God is:

the apostle puts them in opposition to one another. *Rom.* 12. 1, 2. This appears,

1. In complying more with *the dictates of men*, than the will of God. Men draw encouragement from God's forbearance to sin more freely against him; but the fear of punishment for breaking the will of man, lays a restraint upon them: the fear of man is a more powerful curb, to restrain men in their duty, than the fear of God: so we may please a friend, a master, a governor, we are regardless whether we please God or no. Men pleasers are more than God pleasers: man is more advanced as a rule than God, when we submit to human orders and stagger and dispute against divine. Would not a prince think himself slighted in his authority, if any of his servants should decline his commands, by the order of one of his subjects? And will not God make the same account of us, when we deny or delay our obedience, for fear of one of his creatures? In the fear of man, we as little acknowledge God for our sovereign, as we do for our comforter: *Isa.* 51. 12, 13. *I, even I, am he that comforteth you, who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, &c. and forgettest the Lord thy maker, &c.* We put a slight upon God, as if he were not able to bear us out in our duty to him; and incapable to balance the strength of an arm of flesh.

2. In observing that which is materially the will of God, not because it is his will, but *the injunctions of men.* As the word of God may be received, yet not as his word, so the will of God may be performed, yet not as his will. It is materially done, but not formally obeyed: an action, and obedience in that action, are two things: as when man commands the ceasing from all works of the ordinary calling on the Sabbath, it is the same that God enjoins; the cessation, or attendance of his servants on the hearing the word, are conformable in the matter of it to the will of God; but it is only conformable in the obediential part of the acts to the will of man, when it is done only with respect to a human precept. As God hath a right to enact his laws without consulting his

creature in the way of his government; so man is bound to obey those laws, without consulting whether they be agreeable to men's laws or no: if we act the will of God, because the will of our superiors concurs with it, we obey not God in that, but man; a human will being the rule of our obedience; and not the divine: this is to villify God, and make him inferior to man in our esteem, and a valuing the rule of man above that of our Creator.—Since God is the highest perfection and infinitely good, whatsoever rule he gives the creature must be good, else it cannot proceed from God. A base thing cannot be the product of an infinite excellence; and an unreasonable thing cannot be the product of an infinite wisdom and goodness: therefore as the respecting God's will before the will of man is excellent and worthy of a creature, and is an acknowledging the excellence, goodness, and wisdom of God; so the eyeing the will of man before and above the will of God, is, on the contrary, a denial of all those in a lump, and a preferring the wisdom, goodness, and power of man in his law above all those perfections of God in his. Whatsoever men do that looks like moral virtue or abstinence from vices, not out of obedience to the rule God hath set, but because of custom, necessity, example, or imitation, they may in the doing of it be rather said to be apes than christians.

3. In obeying the will of man, when it is contrary *to the will of God.* As the *Israelites* willingly *walked after the commandment*, *Hos.* 5. 11, not of God, but of Jeroboam in the case of the calves: and *made the king's heart glad with their lies. Hos.* 7. 3. They cheered him with their ready obedience to his command for idolatry (which was a lie in itself, and a lie in them) against the commandment of God and the warnings of the prophets; rather than cheer the heart of God with their obedience to his worship instituted by him: nay, and when God offered to cure them their wound, their iniquity breaks out afresh; they would neither have him as a Lord to rule them, nor a Physician to cure them, *Hos.* 7. 1. *When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered.* The whole Persian

nation shrunk at once from a duty due by the light of nature to the Deity, upon a *decree* that *neither God nor man should be petitioned to for thirty days, but only their king. Dan.* 6. One only, Daniel, excepted against it, who preferred his homage to God, above obedience to his prince. An adulterous generation is many times made the rule of men's professions, as is implied in those words of our Saviour, *Mark* 8. 38, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation:* own him among his disciples, and be ashamed of him among his enemies: thus men are said to deny God, *Titus* 1. 16. when they *attend to Jewish fables and the precepts of men rather than the word of God;* when the decrees or canons of fallible men are valued at a higher rate, and preferred before the writings of the Holy Ghost by his apostles. As man naturally disowns the rule God sets him, and owns any other rule than that of God's prescribing, so

THIRDLY, He does this in order to the *setting himself up as his own rule.* As though our own wills, and not God's were the true square and measure of goodness. We make an idol of our own wills, and as much as *self* is exalted God is deposed. The more we esteem our own wills, the more we endeavour to annihilate the will of God; account nothing of him, the more we account of ourselves; and endeavour to render ourselves his superiors by exalting our own wills. No prince but would look upon his authority as invaded, his royalty derided, if a subject should resolve to be a law to himself, in opposition to his known will. True piety is to hate ourselves, deny ourselves, and cleave solely to the service of God. To make ourselves our own rule, and the object of our chiefest love, is atheism. If self denial be the greatest part of godliness, the great letter in the alphabet of religion, self-love is the great letter in the alphabet of practical atheism. *Self* is the great anti-christ and anti-god in the world, that *sets up itself above all that is called God; self-love* is the captain of that black band, 2 *Tim.* 3. 2. it sits in the temple of God, and would be adored as God. Self-love begins, but denying the power of god-

liness, which is the same with denying the ruling power of God, ends the list. It is so far from bending to the righteous will of the Creator, that it would have the eternal will of God stoop to the humour and unrighteous will of a creature; and this is the ground of the contention between the flesh and the spirit in the heart of a renewed man. Flesh wars for the godhead of *self*, and spirit fights for the godhead of God: the one would settle the throne of the Creator, and the other maintain a law of covetousness, ambition, envy, lust, in the stead of God. The evidence of this will appear in these propositions.

1. This is natural to man, as *he is corrupted.* What was the venom of the sin of Adam, is naturally derived with his nature to all his posterity. It was not the eating a forbidden apple, or the pleasing his palate, that Adam aimed at, or was the chief object of his desire; but to live independently on his Creator, and be a god to himself, *Gen. 3. 5, You shall be as gods.* That which was the matter of the devil's temptation, was the incentive of man's rebellion: a likeness to God he aspired to in the judgment of God himself, an infallible interpreter of man's thoughts; *behold, man is become as one of us, to know good and evil,* in regard of self sufficiency and being a rule to himself. The Jews understand the ambition of man to reach no further, than an equality with the angelical nature: but Jehovah here understands it in another sense. God had ordered man by this prohibition not to eat of the fruit of the *tree of knowledge of good and evil;* not to attempt the knowledge of good and evil of himself, but to wait upon the dictates of God; not to trust to his own counsels, but to depend wholly upon him for direction and guidance. Certainly he that would not hold off his hand from so small a thing as an apple, when he had his choice of the fruit of the garden, would not have denied himself any thing his appetite had desired, when that principle had prevailed upon him: he would not have stuck at a greater matter to pleasure himself with the displeasing of God, when for so small a thing he would incur the anger of his Creator.

Thus would he deify his own understanding against the

wisdom of God, and his own appetite against the will of God. This desire of equality with God, a learned man * thinks the apostle intimates, *Phil. 2. 6, Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:* The Son's being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, implies that the robbery of sacrilege committed by our first parents, for which the Son of God humbled himself to the death of the cross, was an attempt to be equal with God, and depend no more upon God's directions, but his own conduct, which could be no less than an invasion of the throne of God, and endeavour to put himself into a posture to be his mate. Other sins, adultery and theft, &c. could not be committed by him at that time, but he immediately puts forth his hand to usurp the power of his Maker: This treason is the old Adam in every man. The first Adam contradicted the will of God to set up himself: the second Adam humbled himself, and did nothing but by the command and will of his Father. This principle wherein the venom of the old Adam lies, must be crucified to make way for the throne of the humble and obedient principle of the new Adam or quickening spirit. Indeed sin in its own nature is nothing else, but *a willing according to self, and contrary to the will of God:* Lusts are therefore called, *Ephes. 2. 3*, the *wills* of the flesh and of the mind. As the precepts of God are God's will: so the violation of these precepts is man's will. And thus man usurps a godhead to himself, by giving that honour to his own will which belongs to God; appropriating the right of rule to himself and denying it to his Creator. That servant that acts according to his own will with a neglect of his master's, refuseth the duty of a servant, and invades the right of his master: This self love and desire of independence on God has been the root of all sin in the world: The great controversy between God and man hath been, whether he or they shall be God; whether his reason or theirs, his will or theirs shall be the guiding principle. As grace is the union of the will of

* Dr. Jackson.

God and the will of the creature; so sin is the opposition of the will of self to the will of God. *Leaning to our own understanding*, is opposed as a natural evil, *to trusting in the Lord*, a supernatural grace, *Prov.* 3. 5. Men commonly love what is their own, their own inventions, their own fancies; therefore the ways of a wicked man are called the *ways of his own heart*, *Eccl.* 11. 9, and the ways of a superstitious man his own devices, *Jer.* 18. 11. *We will walk after our own devices:* We will be a law to ourselves. And what the psalmist saith of the tongue, our tongues are our *own*, who shall controul us? is as truly the language of men's hearts, our wills are our own, who shall check us?

2. This is evident in the dissatisfaction of men with their own consciences *when they contradict the desires of self.* Conscience is nothing but an actuated or reflex knowledge of a superior power and an equitable law; a law impressed, and a power above it impressing it. Conscience is not the lawgiver, but the remembrancer to mind us of that law of nature imprinted upon our souls, and actuate the considerations of the duty and penalty, to apply the rule to our acts, and pass judgment upon matter of fact: it is to give the charge, urge the rule, enjoin the practice of those notions of right, as part of our duty and obedience. But man is much displeased with the directions of conscience, as he is out of love with the accusations and condemning sentence of this officer of God. We cannot naturally endure any quick and lively practical thoughts of God and his will, and distaste our own consciences for putting us in mind of it, they therefore, *Rom.* 1. 28. *like not to retain God in their knowledge*, that is, God in their own consciences; they would blow it out as it is the candle of the Lord in them to direct them, and their acknowledgments of God, to secure themselves against the practice of its principles: they would stop all the avenues to any beam of light, and would not suffer a sparkle of divine knowledge to flutter in their minds, in order to set up another directing rule suited to the fleshly appetite: and when they cannot stop the light of it from glaring in their faces, they

rebel against it, and cannot endure to abide in its paths, *Job* 24. 13. He speaks not of those which had the written word or special revelations; but only a natural light or traditional, handed from Adam. Hence are all the endeavours to still it when it begins to speak, by some carnal pleasures; as Saul's evil spirit with a fit of music; or bribe it with some fits of a deceitful devotion when it holds the law of God in its commanding authority before the mind: they would wipe out all the impressions of it when it presses the advancement of God above self, and entertain it with no better compliment, than *Ahab* did *Elijah, hast thou found me, O my enemy?*

If we are like to God in any thing of our natural fabric, it is in the superior and more spiritual part of our souls. The resistance of that which is most like to God, and instead of God in us, is a disowning of the sovereign represented by that officer. He that would be without conscience would be without God, whose vicegerent it is, and make the sensitive part, which conscience opposes, his law-giver. Thus a man out of respect to sinful self, quarrels with his natural self, and cannot comport himself in a friendly behaviour to his internal and implanted principles. He hates to come under the rebukes of them, as much as Adam hated to come into the presence of God, after he turned traitor against him: the bad entertainment God's deputy hath in us, reflects upon that God whose cause it pleads. It is upon no other account that men loathe the upright language of their own reasons in those matters, and wish the eternal silence of their own consciences, but as they maintain the rights of God, and would hinder the idol of self from usurping his Godhead and prerogative. Though this power be part of a man's self, rooted in his nature, as essential to him and inseparable from him as the best part of his being; yet he quarrels with it as it is God's deputy, and stickling for the honour of God in his soul, and quarrelling with that sinful self he would cherish above God. We are not displeased with this faculty barely as it exerciseth a self-reflection, but as it is God's vicegerent, and bears the mark of his authority in it. In some cases this self-

reflecting act meets with good entertainment, when it acts not in contradiction to self, but suitable to natural affections; as suppose a man hath in his passion struck his child, and caused thereby some great mischief to him, the reflection of conscience will not be unwelcome to him, will work some tenderness in him, because it takes the part of self and of natural affection; but in the more spiritual concerns of God, it will be rated as a busy body.

3. Many, if not most actions, materially good in the world, are done more *because they are agreeable to self*, than as they are honourable to God. As the word of God may be heard not *as his word*, 1 *Thes.* 2. 13, but as there may be pleasing notions in it, or discourses against an opinion or party we disaffect; so the will of God may be performed, not as his will, but as it may gratify some selfish consideration, when we will please God so far as it may not displease ourselves, and serve him as our master so far as his command may be a servant to our humour. When we consider not who it is that commands, but how short it comes of displeasing that sin which rules in our heart, choose what is least burdensome to the flesh and distasteful to our lusts. He that doeth the will of God, not out of conscience of that will, but because it is agreeable to himself, casts down the will of God, and sets his own will in the place of it; takes the crown from the head of God, and places it upon the head of self. If things are done not because they are commanded by God, but desirable to us, it is a disobedient obedience; a conformity to God's will in regard of the matters, a conformity to our own will in regard of the motive; either as the things done are agreeable to natural and moral self, or sinful self.

1. As they are agreeable to *natural or moral self.* When men will practice some points of religion, and walk in the track of some divine precepts; not because they are divine, but because they are agreeable to their humour or constitution of nature; from the sway of a natural bravery, the bias of a secular interest, not from an ingenuous sense of God's authority, or a voluntary submission to his will; as when a man will avoid excess in

drinking, not because it is dishonourable to God, but as it is a blemish to his own reputation, or an impair of the health of his body: doth this deserve the name of an observance of the divine injunction, or rather an obedience to ourselves? Or when a man will be liberal in the distribution of his charity, not with an eye to God's precept, but in compliance with his own natural compassion, or to pleasure the generosity of his nature: the one is obedience to a man's own preservation, the other an obedience to the interest or impulse of a moral virtue. It is not respect to the rule of God, but the authority of self; and at the best, is but the performance of the material part of the divine rule, without any concurrence of a spiritual motive or a spiritual manner. That only is maintaining the rights of God, when we pay an observance to his rule, without examining the agreeableness of it to our secular interest, or consulting with the humour of flesh and blood; when we will not decline his service, though we find it cross, and hath no affinity with the pleasure of our own nature: such an obedience as Abraham manifested in his readiness to sacrifice his son; such an obedience as our Saviour demands in cutting off the right hand. When we observe any thing of divine order upon the account of its suitableness to our natural sentiments, we shall readily divide from him, when the interest of nature turns its point against the interest of God's honour; we shall fall off from him according to the change we find in our own humours. And can that be valued as a setting up the rule of God, which must be deposed upon the mutable interest of an inconstant mind? Esau had no regard to God in delaying the execution of his resolution to shorten his brother's days; though he was awed by the reverence of his father to delay it; he considered, perhaps, how justly he might lie under the imputation of hastening crazy Isaac's death, by depriving him of a beloved son. But had the old man's head been laid in the grave, neither the contrary command of God, nor the nearness of a fraternal relation, could have bound his hands from the act, no more than they did his heart from the resolution, *Gen.* 27. 41. *Esau hated Jacob because of*

the blessing, wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, the days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother.

So many children, that expect at the death of their parents great inheritances or portions, may be observant of them, not in regard of the rule fixed by God, but to their own hopes, which they would not frustrate by a disobligement. Whence is it that many men abstain from gross sins, but in love to their reputation? Wickedness may be acted privately, which a man's own credit puts a bar to the open commission of. The preserving his own esteem may divert him from entering into a brothel-house, to which he hath set his mind before, against a known precept of his Creator. As Pharaoh parted with the Israelites, so do some men with their blemishing sins; not out of a sense of God's rule, but the smart of present judgments, or fear of a future wrath. Our security then, and reputation, is set up in the place of God.

This also may be, and is in renewed men, who have the law written in their hearts, that is, an habitual disposition to an agreement with the law of God; when what is done is with a respect to this habitual inclination, without eyeing the divine precept, which is appointed to be their rule; this also is to set up a creature, as renewed self is, instead of the Creator, and that law of his in his word, which ought to be the rule of our actions: Thus it is when men choose a moral life, not so much out of respect to the law of nature, as it is the law of God, but as it is a law become one with their souls and constitutions. There is more of self in this, than consideration of God; for if it were the latter, the revealed law of God would upon the same reason be received as well as his natural law. From this principle of self, morality comes by some to be advanced above evangelical dictates.

2. As they are *agreeable to sinful self.* Not that the commands of God are suited to indulge the corruptions of men, no more than the law can be said to excite or revive sin. But it is like a scandal taken, not given;

an occasion taken by the tumultuousness of our depraved nature. The *Pharisees* were devout in *long prayers*, not from a sense of duty, or a care of God's honour; but to satisfy their ambition, and rake together fuel for their *covetousness*, *Rom.* 7. 8, 9, that they might have the greater esteem and richer offerings, to free by their prayers the souls of deceased persons from purgatory; an opinion that some think the Jewish synagogue had then entertained, *Matth.* 23. 14. since some of their doctors have defended such a notion. * Men may observe some precepts of God to have a better conveniency to break others. Jehu was ordered to cut off the house of Ahab. The service he undertook was in itself acceptable, but corrupt nature misacted that which holiness and righteousness commanded. God appointed it to magnify his justice, and check the idolatry that had been supported by that family; Jehu acted it to satisfy his revenge and ambition; he did it to fulfil his lust, not the will of God who enjoined him. Jehu applauds it as zeal, and God abhors it as murder, and therefore would *avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu*, *Hos.* 1. 4. Such kind of services are not paid to God for his own sake, but to ourselves for our lust's sake.

4. This is evident in *neglecting to take God's direction upon emergent occasions.* This follows the text, *none did seek God.* When we consult not with him, but trust more to our own will and counsel, we make ourselves our own governors and lords, independent of him: As though we could be our own counsellors, and manage our concerns without his leave and assistance; as though our works were in our own hands and not in the *hands of God*, that we can by our own strength and sagacity direct them to a successful end without him. *Job* 22. 28. If we must *acquaint ourselves with God* before we decree a thing; then to decree a thing without acquainting God with it, is to prefer our purblind wisdom before the infinite wisdom of God; to resolve without consulting God, is

* Gerrard in loc.

to depose God, and deify self, our own wit and strength. We would rather, like Lot, follow our own humour and stay in Sodom, than observe the angel's order to go out of it.

5. As we account the actions of others to be good or evil, *as they suit with or spurn against our fancies and humours.* Virtue is a crime, and vice a virtue, as it is contrary or concurrent with our humours; little reason have many men to blame the actions of others, but because they are not agreeable, to what they affect and desire. We would have all men take directions from us, and move according to our beck; hence that common speech in the world, such an one is an honest friend, why? because he is of their humour, and lackies according to their wills: Thus we make self the measure and square of good and evil in the rest of mankind, and judge of it by our own fancies, and not by the will of God, the proper rule of judgment. Well then let us consider,

Is not this very common, are we not naturally more willing to displease God than displease ourselves, when it comes to a point that we must do one or other? Is not our own counsel of more value with us than conformity to the will of the Creator? Do not our judgments often run counter to the judgment of God? Have his laws a greater respect from us than our own humours. Do we scruple the staining his honour when it comes in competition with our own? Are not the lives of most men a pleasing themselves, without a repentance that ever they displeased God? Is not this to undeify God, to deify ourselves, and disown the property he hath in us by the right of creation and beneficence? We order our own ways by our own humours, as though we were the authors of our own being, and had given ourselves life and understanding. This is to destroy the order that God hath placed between our wills and his own, and a lifting up of the foot above the head; it is the deformity of the creature: The honour of every rational creature consists in the service of the first cause of his being; as the welfare of every creature consists in the orders and proportionable motion of its members, according to the law of its crea-

tion. He that moves and acts according to a law of his own, offers a manifest wrong to God, the highest wisdom and chiefest good; disturbs the order of the world; nulls the design of the righteousness and holiness of God: The law of God is the rule of that order he would have observed in the world: He that makes another law his rule thrusts out the order of the Creator, and establishes the disorder of the creature.

PART III.

THE PRESUMPTION OF ATHEISTICAL MEN.

Man would give laws to his Creator—Strives against his law—Disapproves his government—Impatient in adversity—Envy—Matter and ends of prayer and praise—Presumptuous interpretations of God's judgments—Corrupting the worship of God—Forced meanings put upon scripture—Men forsake God when he crosses their wills—Self love—Self applause—vain glory—Desire of self pleasing doctrines—Indifference to the honour of God—Self confidence—Usurping God's prerogative——Vilifying God.

WHAT has just been advanced will be more evident by the FOURTH thing proposed, That *man would make himself the rule of God, and give laws to his Creator.* We are willing God should be our benefactor, but not our ruler; we are content to admire his excellency and pay him a worship, provided he will walk by our rule. * "This commits a riot upon his nature. To think him to be what we ourselves *would have him and wish him to be, Psal.* 50. 21. We would amplify his mercy and contract his justice; we would have his power enlarged to supply our wants, and straitened when it goes about to revenge our crimes; we would have him wise to defeat our enemies, but not to disappoint our unworthy projects; we would have him all eye to regard our indigence, and blind, not to discern our guilt; we would

* Decay of Christian Piety, p. 169. somewhat altered.

have him true to his promises, regardless of his precepts, and false to his threatenings; we would new mint the nature of God according to our models, and shape a God according to our fancies, as he made us at first according to his own image. Instead of obeying him, we would have him obey us; instead of owning and admiring his perfections, we would have him strip himself of his infinite excellency, and clothe himself with a nature agreeable to our own. This is not only to set up self as the law of God, but to make our own imaginations the model of the nature of God." Corrupted man takes a pleasure to accuse or suspect the actions of God. We would not have him act conveniently to his nature, but act what doth gratify us, and abstain from what distastes us. Man is never well, but when he is impeaching one or other perfection of God's nature, and undermining his glory, as if all his attributes must stand indicted at the bar of our purblind reason. This weed shoots up in the exercise of grace. Peter intended the refusal of our Saviour's washing his feet, as an act of *humility*, but Christ understands it to be a prescribing *a law to himself*, a correcting his love, *John* 13. 8, 9. This is evidenced,

1. In the *strivings* against his law. How many men imply by their lives, that they would have God deposed from his government, and some unrighteous being step into his throne; as if God had or should change his laws of holiness into laws of licentiousness; as if he should abrogate his old eternal precepts and enact contrary ones in their stead? What is the language of such practices, but that they would be God's law-givers and not his subjects? that he should deal with them according to their own wills, and not according to his righteousness? that they could make a more holy, wise, and righteous law than the law of God? that their imaginations, and not God's righteousness, should be the rule of his doing good to them? *Jer.* 9. 31. *They have forsaken my law, and walked after the imaginations of their own heart.*

When an act is known to be a sin, and the law that forbids it acknowledged to be the law of God, and after this we persist in that which is contrary to it, we tax his

wisdom as if he did not understand what was convenient for us, *we would teach God knowledge;* it is an implicit wish that God had laid aside the holiness of his nature, and framed a law to pleasure our lusts. When God calls for *weeping, and mourning, and girding with sackcloth*, upon approaching judgments, then the corrupt heart is for joy and gladness, *eating of flesh and drinking of wine, because to-morrow they should die, Isa.* 22. 12, 13; as if God had mistaken himself when he ordered them so much sorrow, when their lives were so near an end, and had lost his understanding when he ordered such a precept. Disobedience is therefore called contention, *Rom.* 2. 8, *Contentious and obey not the truth.* Contention against God, whose truth it is that they disobey; a dispute with him, which hath more wisdom in itself and conveniency for them, his truth or their imaginations. The more the love, goodness, and holiness of God appears in any command, the more are we naturally averse from it, and cast an imputation on him, as if he were foolish, unjust, cruel, and that we could have advised and directed him better. The goodness of God is eminent to us in appointing a day for his own worship, wherein we might converse with him and he with us, and our souls be refreshed with spiritual communications from him, and we rather use it for the ease of our bodies than the advancement of our souls; as if God were mistaken, and injured his creature, when he urged the spiritual part of duty. Every disobedience to the law is an implicit giving law to him, and a charge against him that he might have provided better for his creature.

2. In *disapproving* the methods of God's government of the world. If the counsels of heaven roll not about according to their schemes, instead of adoring the unsearchable depths of his judgments, they call him to the bar, and accuse him, because they are not fitted to their narrow capacities; as if a nut-shell could contain an ocean. As corrupt reason esteems the highest truths, foolishness; so it counts the most righteous ways, unequal: thus we commence a suit against God, as though he had not acted righteously and wisely, but must give

an account of his proceedings at our tribunal. This is to make ourselves God's superiors, and presume to instruct him better in the government of the world; as though God hindered himself and the world, in not making us of his privy council, and not ordering his affairs according to the contrivance of our dim understandings.

Is not this manifest in our immoderate complaints of God's dealings with his church, as though there were a coldness in God's affections to his church, and a glowing heat towards it only in us? Hence are those importunate desires for things which are not established by any promise, as though we would over-rule and over-persuade God to comply with our humour. We have an ambition to be God's tutors and direct him in his counsels: *Who hath been his counsellor*, saith the apostle? *Rom.* 11. 34. Who ought not to be his counsellor? saith corrupt nature? Men will find fault with God in what he suffers to be done according to their own minds, when they feel the bitter fruit of it. When Cain had killed his brother, and his conscience racked him, how saucily and discontentedly doth he answer God, *Gen.* 4. 9. *Am I my brother's keeper?* Since thou dost own thyself the rector of the world, thou shouldest have preserved his person from my fury; since thou dost accept his sacrifice before my offering, preservation was due as well as acceptance. If this temper be found on earth, no wonder it is lodged in hell. That deplorable person under the sensible stroke of God's sovereign justice, would oppose his nay to God's will, *Luke* 16. 30. *And he said, nay, father* Abraham, *but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent:* He would presume to prescribe more effectual means than Moses and the prophets, to inform men of the danger they incurred by their sensuality. *David was displeased*, it is said, 2 *Sam.* 6. 8, *when the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah;* not with Uzzah, who was the object of his pity, but with God who was the inflicter of that punishment.

When any of our friends have been struck with a rod, against our sentiments and wishes, have not our hearts

been apt to swell in complaints against God, as though he disregarded the goodness of such a person, did not see with our eyes, and measure him by our esteem of him? As if he should have asked our counsel, before he had resolved, and managed himself according to our will, rather than his own. If he be patient to the wicked, we are apt to tax his holiness, and accuse him as an enemy to his own law. If he inflict severity upon the righteous, we are ready to suspect his goodness, and charge him to be an enemy to his affectionate creature. If he spare the Nimrods of the world, we are ready to ask *where is the God of judgment?* If he afflict the *pillars of the earth*, we are ready to question where is the God of mercy? It is impossible, since the depraved nature of man, and the various interests and passions in the world, that infinite power and wisdom can act righteously for the good of the universe, but he will shake some corrupt interest or other upon the earth; so various are the inclinations of men, and such a changeable judgment hath every man in himself, that the divine method he applauds this day, upon a change of his interest he will cavil at the next: it is impossible for the just orders of God to please the same person many weeks, scarce many minutes together: God must cease to be God or to be holy, if he should manage the concerns of the world according to the fancies of men. How unreasonable is it thus to impose laws upon God? Must God revoke his own orders? Govern according to the dictates of his creatures? Must God, who hath only power and wisdom to sway the sceptre, become the obedient subject of every man's humour, and manage every thing to serve the design of a simple creature? This is not to be God, but to set the creature in his throne: though this be not formally done, yet that it is interpretatively and practically done, is every hour's experience.

3. In *impatience* in our particular concerns. It is ordinary with man to charge God in his complaints in the time of affliction. Therefore it is the commendation the Holy Ghost gives to Job, *Job* 1. 22, That *in all this*, that is, in those many waves that rolled over him, he *did*

not charge God foolishly, he never spake nor thought any thing unworthy of the majesty and righteousness of God: yet afterwards we find him warping; he mistakes the affliction to be an act of God's oppression, and not of his goodness, *Job* 10. 3. *Is it good for thee that thou shouldest oppress?* He seems to charge God with injustice, for punishing him when he was not wicked, for which he appeals to God; *thou knowest that I am not wicked*, ver. 7, and that God acted not like a Creator, ver. 8. If our projects are disappointed, what fretfulness against God's management are our hearts racked with? How do uncomely passions bubble up in us, interpretatively at least, wishing that the arms of his power had been bound, and the eye of his omniscience been hoodwinked, that we might have been left to our own liberty and designs? And this oftentimes when we have more reason to bless him, than repine at him. The Israelites murmured more against God in the wilderness, with manna in their mouths, than they did at Pharoah in the brickilns, with their garlic and onions. Though we repine at instruments in our afflictions, yet God counts it a reflection upon himself. The Israelites' speaking against Moses, was in God's interpretation rebellion against himself. *Numb.* 16. 41, compared with 17. 10. And rebellion is always a desire of imposing laws and conditions upon those against whom the rebellion is raised. The sottish dealings of the vine-dressers in Franconia with the statue of St. Urban, the protector of the vines, upon his own day, is an emblem of our dealing with God; if it be a clear day and portend a prosperous vintage, they honour the statue and drink healths to it; if it be a rainy day, and presage scantiness, they daub it with dirt in indignation. We cast out our mire and dirt against God when he acts contrary to our wishes, and flatter him when the wind of his providence joins itself to the tide of our interest.

Men set a high price upon themselves, and are angry that God values them not at the same rate as if their judgment concerning themselves, were more piercing than his. This is to disannul God's Judgment, and

condemn him, and *count ourselves righteous, Job* 40. 8. This is the epidemical disease of human nature; they think they deserve caresses instead of rods, and upon crosses are more ready to tear out the heart of God, than reflect humbly upon their own hearts. When we accuse God, we applaud ourselves and make ourselves his superiors, intimating that we have acted more righteously to him than he to us, which is the highest manner of imposing laws upon him: as that emperor accused the justice of God for snatching him out of the world too soon. *Cœlum suspiciens vitam, &c. Vita Titi, cap.* 10. What an high piece of practical atheism is this, to desire that infinite wisdom should be guided by our folly, and asperse the righteousness of God rather than blemish our own? Instead of silently submitting to his will and adoring his wisdom, we declaim against him, as an unwise and unjust governor: we would invert his order, make him the steward and ourselves the proprietors of what we are and have: We deny ourselves to be sinners, and our mercies to be forfeited.

4. It is evidenced, in *envying the gifts and prosperities of others.* Envy hath a deep tincture of practical atheism, and is a *cause* of atheism. We are unwilling to leave God to be the proprietor, and do what he will with his own, and as a Creator to do what he pleases with his creatures. We assume a liberty to direct God what portions, when and how he should bestow upon his creatures. We would not let him chuse his own favourites, and pitch upon his own instruments for his glory: as if God should have asked counsel of us how he should dispose of his benefits. We are unwilling to leave to his wisdom the management of his own judgments to the wicked, and the dispensation of his own love to ourselves. This temper is natural: it is as ancient as the first age of the world. Adam envied God a felicity by himself, and would not spare a tree that he had reserved as a mark of his sovereignty. The passion that God had given Cain to employ against his sin, he turns against his Creator: he was wroth with God and with Abel; but envy was at the root, because

his brother's sacrifice *was accepted and his refused.* How could he envy his accepted person, without reflecting upon the accepter of his offering? Good men have not been free from it. Job questions the goodness of God, that he should *shine upon the counsel of the wicked, Job* 10. 3. Jonah had too much of self in fearing to be counted a false prophet, when he came with absolute denunciations of wrath. And when he could not bring a volley of destroying judgments upon the Ninevites, he would shoot his fury against his master, envying those poor people the benefit, and God the honour of his mercy. And this after he had been sent into the whale's belly to learn humiliation; which, though he exercised there, yet those two great branches of self-pride and envy were not lopped off from him in the belly of hell. And God was fain to take pains with him, and by a gourd, scarce makes him ashamed of his peevishness. Envy is not like to cease, till all atheism be cashiered, and that is in heaven.

This sin is an imitation of the devil, whose first sin upon earth was envy, as his first sin in heaven was pride. It is wishing that to ourselves which the devil asserted as his right, to give the *kingdoms of the world to whom he pleased.* It is anger with God, because he hath not given us a patent for government. It utters the same language in disparagement of God, as Absalom did in reflection on his father. If I were king in Israel, justice should be better managed: If I were Lord of the world, there should be more wisdom to discern the merits of men, and more righteousness in distributing to them their several portions. Thus we impose laws upon God, and would have the righteousness of his will submit to the corruptions of ours, and have him lower himself to gratify our minds, rather than fulfil his own. We charge the author of those gifts with injustice, that he hath not dealt equally; or with ignorance, that he hath mistook his mark. In the same breath that we censure him by our peevishness, we would guide him by our wills. This is an unreasonable part of atheism. If all were in the same state and con-

dition, the order of the world would be impaired. Is God bound to take care of thee, and neglect all the world besides? *Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?* Joseph had reason to be displeased with his brothers, if they had muttered, because he gave Benjamin a double and the rest a single portion. It was unfit that they, who had deserved no gift at all, should prescribe him rules how to dispense his own blessings; much more unworthy it is to deal so with God; yet this is too common.

5. It is evidenced, in *corrupt matter or ends of prayer and praise.* When we are importunate for those things, that we know not whether the righteousness, holiness, and wisdom of God can grant, because he hath not discovered his will in any promise to bestow them; we would then impose such conditions on God, which he never obliged himself to grant; when we pray for things not so much to glorify God, which ought to be the end of prayer, as to gratify ourselves. We acknowledge indeed by the act of petitioning, that there is a God? but we would have him undeify himself to be at our call, and debase himself to serve our turns. When we desire things, which are repugnant to those attributes, whereby he manages the government of the world; when by some superficial services we think we have gained indulgence to sins; which seems to be the thought of the strumpet in paying her vows, to wallow more freely in the mire of sensual pleasures, *I have peace offerings with me, this day I have paid my vows, I have made my peace with God, and have entertainment for thee; Prov.* 7. 14. Or when men desire God to bless them in the commission of some sin; as when Balak and Balaam offered sacrifices, that they might prosper in the cursing of the Israelites. So for a man to pray to God to save him while he neglects the means of salvation appointed by God; or to renew him, when he slights the word, the only instrument to that purpose; this is to impose laws upon God, contrary to his declared will and wisdom, and to desire him to slight his own institutions. When we come into the presence of God with lusts reeking in our

hearts, and leap from sin to duty, we would impose the law of our corruption on the holiness of God. While we pray the *will of God may be done*, self-love wishes its own will may be performed, as though God should serve our humours, when we will not obey his precepts. And when we make vows under any affliction, what is it often but a secret contrivance to bend and flatter him to our conditions? We will serve him if he will restore us; we think thereby to compound the business with him, and bring him down to our terms.

6. It is evidenced, in positive and bold *interpretations of the judgments of God* in the world. To interpret the judgments of God to the disadvantage of the sufferer, unless it be an unusual judgment, and have a remarkable hand of God in it, and the sin be rendered plainly legible in the affliction, is a presumption of this nature. When men will judge the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with the sacrifices, greater sinners than others, and themselves righteous, because no drops of it were dashed upon them. Or when Shimei, being of the house of Saul, shall judge, according to his own interest and desires, David's flight upon Absalom's rebellion to be a punishment for invading the rights of Saul's family, and depriving him of the succession in the kingdom, as if he had been of God's privy council when he decreed such acts of justice in the world. Thus we would fasten our own wills as a law upon God, and interpret his acts according to the motions of *self*. Is it not too ordinary when God sends an affliction upon those that bear ill will to us, to judge it to be a righting of our cause, to be a fruit of God's concern for us in revenging our wrongs, as if we had heard the secrets of God, or as Eliphaz saith, had turned over the records of heaven, *Job* 15. 8. This is a judgment, according to self love, not a divine rule; and imposeth laws upon heaven, implying a secret wish, that God would take care only of them, make our concerns his own; not in ways of kindness and justice, but according to our fancies: and this is common in the prophane world in those curses they so readily express

upon any affront; as if God were bound to draw his arrows and shoot them into the heart of all their offenders at their beck and pleasure.

7. It is evidenced, in *mixing rules for the worship of God,* with those which have *been ordered by him.* Since men are most prone to live by sense, it is no wonder that a sensible worship, which affects their outward sense, with some kind of amazement, is dear to them, and spiritual worship, most loathsome. Pompous rites have been the great engine wherewith the devil hath deceived the souls of men, and brought them to nauseate the simplicity of divine worship, as unworthy the majesty and excellency of God, 2 *Cor.* 11. 3. Thus the Jews would not understand the glory of the second temple in the presence of the Messiah, because it had not the pompous grandeur of Solomon's temple.

Hence in all ages men have been forward to disfigure God's models, and dress up something of their own; as though God had been defective in providing for his own honour in his institutions without the assistance of his creature. This hath always been in the world; the old world had their imaginations, and the new world has continued them. The Israelites in the midst of miracles, and under the memory of a famous deliverance, would worship a calf. The Pharisees, that sat in Moses's chair, would coin new traditions and enjoin them to be as current as the law of God, *Mat.* 13. 6. Papists will be blending the Christian appointments with pagan ceremonies, to please the carnal fancies of the common people. Altars have been multiplied, under the knowledge of the law of God, *Hos.* 8. 12. Interest is made the balance of the convenience of God's injunctions. Jeroboam fitted a worship to political ends, and posted up calves to prevent his subjects revolting from his sceptre, which might be occasioned by their resort to Jerusalem, and converse with the body of the people from whom they were separated, 1 *Kings* 12. 27. Men will be putting in their own dictates with God's laws, and are unwilling he should be the sole governor of the world without their counsel; they will not suffer him to be Lord of that which

is purely and solely his own concern. How often hath the practice of the primitive church, the sentiments of our ancestors, been owned as a more authentic rule in matters of worship, than the mind of God delivered in his word? It is natural by creation to worship God; and it is as natural by corruption for man to worship him in a human way, and not in a divine. Is not this to impose laws upon God? To esteem ourselves wiser than he? To think him negligent of his own service, and that our feeble minds can find out ways to accommodate his honour, better than himself hath done? Thus do men for the most part equal their own imaginations to God's oracles: as Solomon built a high place to Moloch and Chemosh, upon the Mount of Olives, to face on the east part Jerusalem and the temple, 1 *Kings* 11. 7. This is not only to impose laws on God, but also to make *self* the standard of them.

8. It is evidenced in *fitting interpretations of scripture to their own minds and humours.* Like the Lacedemonians, that dress their images of the gods according to the fashion of their own country, we would wrest scripture to serve our own designs; and judge the law of God by the law of sin; and make the serpentine seed in us to be the interpreter of divine oracles. This is like Belshazzar; to drink healths out of the sacred vessels. As God is the author of his law and word, so he is the best interpreter of it; the scripture having an impress of divine wisdom, holiness, and goodness, must be regarded according to that impress, with a submission and meekness of spirit, and reverence of God in it. But when in our enquiries into the word, we enquire not of God, but consult flesh and blood, the temper of the times wherein we live, or the satisfaction of a party we side withal, and impose glosses upon it according to our own fancies; it is to put laws upon God and make self the rule of his authority. He that interprets the law to bolster up some eager appetite against the will of the law-giver, ascribes to himself as great an authority as he that enacted it.

9. In falling off from God after some fair compliances, when his will *crosses ours.* They will walk with him as

far as he pleases them, and leave him upon the first distaste, as though God must observe their humours more than they his will. Amos must be suspended from prophecying, because the *land could not bear his words,* and his discourses condemned their unworthy practices against God, *Amos.* 7. 10. &c. The young man came not to receive directions from our Saviour, but expected a confirmation of his own rules, rather than an imposition of new, *Mark* 10. 17, 22. He rather cares for commendations than instructions, and upon the disappointment turns his back; he was sad, that Christ would not suffer him to be rich and a Christian together, and leaves him because his command was not suitable to the law of his covetousness. Some truths that are at a further distance from us, we can *hear gladly.* But when the conscience begins to smart under others, if God will not observe our wills, we will with Herod be a law to ourselves, *Mark* 6. 20, 27. More instances might be observed.

Ingratitude is setting up self, and an imposing laws on God. It is as much as to say God did no more than he was obliged to do; as if the mercies we have, were an act of duty in God, and not of bounty. Insatiable desires after wealth. Hence are those speeches, *Jam.* 4. 13, *We will go into such a city and buy and sell, and get gain.* As though they had the command of God, and God must submit to their wills. When our hearts are not contented with any supply of our wants, but are craving an overplus for our lust: when we are unsatisfied in the midst of plenty, and still like the grave, cry, *give, give;* and also when we are incorrigible under affliction.

Secondly, As man would be a law to himself, so he would be *his own end and happiness in opposition to God.* Here four things shall be discoursed on. 1. Man would make himself his own end and happiness. 2. He would make any thing his end and happiness rather than God. 3. He would make himself the end of all creatures. 4. He would make himself the end of God.

First, 1. Man would make himself *his own end and happiness.* As God ought to be esteemed the *first cause,* in point of our dependance on him, so he ought to be

our *last end*, in point of our enjoyment of him. When we therefore trust in ourselves, we refuse him as the first cause; and when we act for ourselves, and expect a blessedness from ourselves, we refuse him as the chief good, and last end, which is an undeniable piece of atheism. For man is a creature of a higher rank than others in the world; and was not made as animals, plants, and other works of the divine power, materially to glorify God; but a rational creature, intentionally to honour God by obedience to his rule, dependance on his goodness, and zeal for his glory. It is therefore as much a slighting of God, for a creature, to set himself up as his own end, as to regard himself as his own law. For the discovery of this, observe that there is a three-fold self love.

There is a *natural* self love, which is common to us by the law of nature with other creatures, inanimate as well as animate; and so closely twisted with the nature of every creature, that it cannot be dissolved but with the dissolution of nature itself. It consisted not with the wisdom and goodness of God to create an unnatural nature, or to command any thing unnatural: nor doth he, for when he commands us to sacrifice ourselves, and dearest lives for himself, it is not without a promise of a more noble state and being, in exchange for what we lose. This self love is not only commendable, but necessary, as a rule to measure that duty we owe to our neighbour, whom we cannot love as ourselves, if we do not *first love* ourselves: God having planted this self-love in our nature, makes this natural principle the measure of our affection to all mankind of the same blood with ourselves.

There is a *carnal* self-love, when a man loves himself above God, in opposition to God, with a contempt of God; when our thoughts, affections, and designs centre only in our own fleshly interest; and rob God of his honour to make a present of it to ourselves. Thus natural self-love, in itself good, becomes criminal by the excess, when it would be superior, and not subordinate to God.

A *gracious* self-love. When we love ourselves for higher ends than the nature of a creature, as a creature

dictates, viz. in subserviency to the glory of God.—This is a reduction of the revolted creature, to his true and happy order. A Christian is therefore said to be *created in Christ to good works, Eph.* 1. 10. As all creatures were created, not only for themselves, but for the honour of God; so the grace of the new creation carries a man to answer this end, and to order all his operations to the honour of God. The first self-love I mentioned is from *nature,* the second from *sin,* the third from *grace.* The first is implanted by *creation,* the second the fruit of *corruption,* and the third is by the powerful *operation of grace.* Carnal self-love is set up in the stead of God as our last end; like the sea, which all the little and great streams of our actions run to and rest in.

And this self-love is *natural.* It sticks as close to us as our souls; it is as natural as sin; the foundation of all the evil in the world. As self-abhorrency is the first stone that is laid in conversion, so an inordinate self-love was the first inlet to all iniquity; as grace is a rising from self to centre in God, so is sin a shrinking from God into the mire of a carnal selfishness. Since every creature is nearest to itself and next to God, it cannot fall from God, but must immediately sink into itself.* And therefore all sins are well said to be branches, or modifications of this fundamental passion. What is wrath, but a defence and strengthening of self, against the attempts of some real or imaginary evil? Whence springs envy, but from a self-love grieved at its own wants in the midst of another's enjoyment, able to supply it? What is impatience, but a regret, that self is not provided for at the rate of our wishes, and that it hath met with a shock against supposed merit? What is pride, but a sense of self-worth, a desire to have self of a higher elevation than others? What is drunkenness, but a seeking a satisfaction for sensual self in the spoils of reason? No sin is committed as sin, but as it pretends a self-satisfaction. Sin indeed may well be termed a man's self, because it is, since the loss of original righteousness, the form that over-spreads

* More, Dial. 2. § 17. p. 274.

every part of our souls. The understanding assents to nothing false, but under the notion of true, and the will embraces nothing evil, but under the notion of good; but the rule whereby we measure the truth and goodness of proposed objects is not the unerring word, but the inclinations of self, the gratifying of which is the aim of our whole lives. Sin and self are all one. What is called a *living to sin* in one place, is called a living to *self* in another, *That they that live should not live unto themselves*, *Rom.* 6. 1 *Cor.* 5. 15. And upon this account it is that both the Hebrew word חטא, and the Greek word ἁμαρτάνειν, used in Scripture to express sin, properly signify to miss the mark, and swerve from the object to which all our actions should be directed, viz. the glory of God. When we fell to loving ourselves, we fell from loving God; and therefore, when the Psalmist saith, *Psal.* 14. 2, *There were none that sought God*, viz. as the last end, he presently adds, *they are all gone aside*, viz. from their true mark, and therefore become filthy.

Since this self-love is natural, it is also *universal. Psal.* 14. 1. The not seeking God is as universal as our ignorance of him. No man in a state of nature, but hath it predominant; no renewed man on this side heaven, but hath it partially. The one hath it flourishing, the other hath it struggling. If to aim at the glory of God as the chief end, and *not to live to ourselves*, be the greatest mark of the restoration of the divine image, and a conformity to Christ, who *glorified not himself*, but the *Father*. 1 *Cor.* 5. 15. *Heb.* 1. 5. *John* 17. 4. Then every man wallowing in the mire of corrupt nature, pays homage to self, as a renewed man is biassed by the honour of God. The Holy Ghost excepts none from this crime, *Phil.* 2. 21. *All seek their own.* It is rare for them to look above or beyond themselves: whatsoever may be the immediate subject of their thoughts and enquiries, yet the utmost end and stage, is their profit, honour, or pleasure. Whatever it be, that immediately possesses the mind and will, self sits like a queen, and sways the sceptre, and orders things at that rate, that God is excluded, and can find no room in all his thoughts, *Psal.* 10. 4. *The wicked*

through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God, God is not in all his thoughts. The whole little world of man is so overflowed with a deluge of self, that the dove, the glory of the Creator, can find no place where to set its foot; and if ever it gain the favour of admittance, it is to disguise and be a vassal to some carnal project; as the glory of God was a mask for the murdering his servants. It is from the power of this principle, that the difficulty of conversion arises. As there is no greater pleasure to a believing soul, than the giving itself up to God, and no stronger desire in him than to have a fixed and unchangeable will to serve the designs of his honour; so there is no greater torment to a wicked man than to part with his carnal ends, and lay down the Dagon of self at the feet of the ark. Self-love and self-opinion in the pharisees, way-laid all the entertainment of truth, *John* 5. 44, *They sought honour one of another, and not the honour which comes from God.* It is of so large an extent, and so insinuating a nature, that it winds itself into the exercise of moral virtues, mixes with our charity, *Matt.* 6. 2. and finds nourishment in the ashes of martyrdom, 1 *Cor.* 13. 3. This making ourselves our end, will appear in,

1. In frequent *self-applauses*, and inward overweening reflections. Nothing more ordinary in the natures of men, than a dotage on their own perfections, acquisitions, or actions in the world. Most think of themselves *above what they ought to think*, *Rom.* 12. 3, 4.; few think of themselves so meanly as they ought to think; this sticks as close to us as our skin. And as humility is the beauty of grace, this is the vilest soil of nature. Our thoughts run more delightfully upon the track of our own perfections, than the excellency of God. And when we find any thing of a seeming worth, that may make us glitter in the eyes of the world, how cheerfully do we grasp and embrace ourselves? When the grosser profanenesses of men have been discarded, and the floods of them dammed up, the head of corruption, whence they sprang, will swell the higher within, in self-applauding speculations of their own reformation, without acknowledgments

of their own weaknesses, and desires of divine assistance to make a further progress. *I thank God I am not like this publican, Luke* 18. 11. A self-reflection, with a contempt rather than compassion to his neighbour, is common to every Pharisee. The vapours of self-affections, in our clouded understandings, like those in the air in misty mornings, alter the appearance of things, and make them look bigger than they are. This is thought by some to be the sin of the fallen angels; who reflecting upon their own natural excellency superior to other creatures, would find a blessedness in their own nature, as God did in his, and make themselves the last end of their actions. It is from this principle we are naturally so ready to compare ourselves rather with those that are below us than with those that are above us; and often think those that are above us, inferior to us, and secretly glory that we are become none of the meanest and lowest in natural or moral excellencies.

How far were the gracious penmen of the Scripture from this, who, when possessed and directed by the Spirit of God, and filled with a sense of him, instead of applauding themselves, publish upon record their own faults to all the eyes of the world? And if Peter, as some think, dictated the gospel which Mark wrote as his amanuensis; it is observable, that his crime in denying his master is aggravated in that gospel in some circumstances, and less spoken of his repentance, than in the other evangelists; *When he thought thereon he wept: Mark* 14. 72. But in the other, *He went out and wept bitterly. Matt.* 26. 37. *Luke* 22. 62. This is one part of atheism and self-idolatry, to magnify ourselves with the forgetfulness, and to the injury of our Creator.

2. In ascribing *the glory of what we do or have, to ourselves*, to our own wisdom, power, virtue, &c. How flaunting is Nebuchadnezzar, at the prospect of Babylon, which he had exalted to be the head of so great an empire, *Dan.* 4. 30. *Is not this great Babylon that I have built?* For, &c. He struts upon the battlements of his palace, as if there were no God but himself in the world; while his eye could not but see the heavens above him to

be none of his own framing; attributing his acquisitions to his own arm, and referring them to his own honour, for his own delight; not for the honour of God, as a creature ought; nor for the advantage of his subjects, as the duty of a prince. He regards Babylon as his heaven, and himself as his idol, as if he were all, and God nothing. An example of this we have in the present age. But it is often observed, that God vindicates his own honour, brings the most heroical men to contempt and unfortunate ends, as a punishment of their pride, as he did here, *Dan.* 4. 31. *While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, &c.* * This was Herod's crime, to suffer others to do it: he had discovered his eloquence actively, and made himself his own end passively, in approving the flatteries of the people; and offered not with one hand to God the glory, he received from his people with the other. *Acts* 12. 22, 23. Samosatenus is reported to put down the hymns which were sung for the glory of God and Christ, and caused songs to be sung in the temple for his own honour. When any thing succeeds well, we are ready to attribute it to our own prudence, and industry: if we meet with a cross, we fret against the stars, and fortune, and second causes, and sometimes against God; as they curse God as well as their king, *Isa.* 8. 21, not acknowledging any defect in themselves. The psalmist by his repetition of *not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name give glory, Psal.* 115. 1, implies the naturality of this temper, and the difficulty to cleanse our hearts from those self-reflections. If it be angelical to refuse an undue glory stolen from God's throne, *Rev.* 22. 8, 9, it is diabolical to accept and cherish it. To seek our *own glory is not glory, Prov.* 25. 27. It is vile, and the dishonour of a creature, who by the law of his creation is referred to another end. So much as we sacrifice to our own credit, to the dexterity of our hands, or the sagacity of our wit, we detract from God.

3. In desires *to have self-pleasing doctrines.* When

* Sanderson's Sermons.

we cannot endure to hear any thing that crosses the flesh; though the wise man tells us, it is better to hear the *rebuke of the wise, than the song of fools*, *Eccles.* 7. 5. If Hanani the Seer reprove king Asa for not relying on the Lord; his passion shall be armed for self against the prophet, and arrest him a prisoner, 2 *Chron.* 16. 10. If Micaiah declare to Ahab the evil that shall befall him, Amon the governor shall receive orders to shut him up in a dungeon. Fire doth not sooner seize upon combustible matter, than fury will be kindled, if self be but touched. This interest of lustful self barred the heart of Herodias against the entertainment of the truth, and caused her savagely to dip her hands in the blood of the Baptist, to make him a sacrifice to that inward idol.

4. In being highly *concerned for injuries done to ourselves, and little or not at all concerned for injuries done to God.* How will the blood rise in us, when our honour and reputation is invaded, and scarce reflect upon the dishonour God suffers in our sight and hearing; violent passions will transform us into *Boanerges* in the one case, and our unconcernedness render us *Gallios* in the other. We shall extenuate that which concerns God, and aggravate that which concerns ourselves. Nothing but the death of Jonathan, a first-born and a generous son, will satisfy his father Saul, when the authority of his edict was broken by his tasting of honey; though he had recompensed his crime committed in ignorance, by the purchase of a gallant victory. But when the authority of God was violated in saving the Amalekite's cattle, against the command of a greater sovereign than himself; he can colour the business, and excuse it with a design of sacrificing. He was not so earnest in hindering the people from the breach of God's command, as he was in vindicating the honour of his own: 1 *Sam.* 15. 21. He could hardly admit of an excuse to salve his own honour; but in the concerns of God's honour, pretends piety to cloak his avarice. And it is often seen, when the violation of God's authority, and the stain of our own reputation are coupled together; we are more troubled for what disgraces us, than for what dishonours God. When Saul had thus transgressed, he is

desirous that Samuel would turn again to preserve his own honour before the elders, rather than grieved that he had broken the command of God, v. 30.

5. In *trusting* in ourselves. When we consult with our own wit and wisdom, more than inquire of God, and ask leave of him. As the Assyrian, *Isa.* 10. 13, *By the strength of my hands I have done it, and by wisdom, for I am prudent.* When we attempt things in the strength of our own heads and parts, and trust in our own industry, without application to God, for direction, blessing, and success, we affect the privilege of the Deity, and make gods of ourselves. The same language in reality with Ajax in Sophocles. Others think to overcome with the assistance of the gods, but I hope to gain honour without them. Dependence and trust is an act due from the creature only to God. Hence God aggravates the crime of the Jews in trusting in Egypt, *Isa.* 31. 3. *the Egyptians are men and not gods.* Confidence in ourselves is a defection from God, *Jer.* 17. 5. And when we depart from and cast off God to depend upon ourselves, which is but an arm of flesh we choose the arm of flesh for our God; we rob God of that confidence, we ought to place in him, and that adoration which is due to him, and build it upon another foundation. Not that we are to neglect the reason and parts God hath given us, or spend more time in prayer than in consulting about our own affairs; but to mix our own intentions in business, with ejaculations to heaven, and take God along with us in every motion. But certainly it is an idolizing of self, when we are more diligent in our attendance on our own wit, then fervent in our recourses to God.

6. The power of sinful self, above the efficacy of the notion of God, is evident in our *workings for carnal self, against the light of our own consciences.* When men of sublime reason, and clear natural wisdom, are voluntary slaves to their own lusts; row against the stream of their own consciences; serve carnal self with a disgraceful and disturbing drudgery; making it their

God, sacrificing natural self, all sentiments of virtue, and the quiet of their lives, to the pleasure, honour, and satisfaction of carnal self: this is prostituting God in his deputy, Conscience, to carnal affections, when their eyes are shut against the enlightenings of it, and their ears are deaf to its voice, but open to the least breath and whisper of self. Much more might be said, but let us see what atheism lurks in this, and how it intrencheth upon God.

1. It is a *usurping God's prerogative.* It is God's prerogative to be his own end, and act for his own glory; because there is nothing superior to him in excellency and goodness to act for. He had not his being from any thing without himself, whereby he should be obliged to act for any thing but himself. To make ourselves then our last end, is to rival God in his being, the supreme good, and blessedness to himself; as if we were our own principle, the author of our own being, and were not obliged to a higher power than ourselves, for what we are and have. To direct the lines of all our motions to ourselves, is to imply that they first issued only from ourselves. When we are rivals to God in his chief end, we own or desire to be rivals to him in the principle of his being; this is to set ourselves in the place of God. All things have something without them, and above them as their end. All inferior creatures act for some superior order in the rank of creation; the lesser animals are designed for the greater, and all for man; man therefore for something nobler than himself. To make ourselves therefore our own end, is to deny any superior, to whom we are to direct our actions. God alone being the Supreme Being, can be his own ultimate end; for if there were any thing higher and better than God, the purity and righteousness of his own nature would cause him to act for and toward that as his chief mark. This is the highest sacrilege, to alienate the proper good and rights of God, and employ them for our own use; to steal from him his own honour, and put it into our own cabinets; like

those birds that ravished the sacrifice from the altar and carried it to their own nests: * When we love only ourselves, and act for no other end but ourselves, we invest ourselves with the dominion which is the right of God, and take the crown from his head: for as the crown belongs to the king, so to love his own will, to will by his own will and for himself, is the property of God; because he hath no other will, no other end above him to be the rule and scope of his actions. When therefore we are by self-love transformed wholly into ourselves, we make ourselves our own foundation, without God and against God; when we mind our own glory and praise, we would have a royal state equal with God, *who created all things for himself.* What can man do more for God than he naturally doth for himself, since he doth all those things for himself which he should do for God? We own ourselves to be our own creators and benefactors, and throw off all sentiments of gratitude to him.

2. It is a *vilifying* of God. When we make ourselves our end, it is plain language that God is not our happiness: we postpone God to ourselves, as if he were not an object so excellent and fit for our love as ourselves are; for it is irrational to make that our end, which is not God, and the chiefest good. It is to deny him to be better than we, to make him not to be so good as ourselves, and so fit to be our chief good as ourselves are; that he hath not deserved any such acknowledgment at our hands by all that he hath done for us. We assert ourselves his superiors by such kind of acting, though we are infinitely more inferior to God than any creature can be to us. Man cannot dishonour God more than by referring that to his own glory, which God made for his own praise, upon account whereof he only hath a right to glory and praise, and none else. He thus *changeth the glory of the incorruptible God into a corruptible image; Rom.* 1. 23, a perishing fame and reputation, which extends but little beyond the limits of his own habitation;

* Sabunde, tit. 140.

or if it doth, survives but a few years, and perishes at last with the age wherein he lived.

3. It is as much as in us lies, a *destroying of God.* By this temper we destroy that God that made us, because we destroy his intention and his honour. God cannot outlive his will and his glory; because he cannot have any other rule but his own will, or any other end but his own honour. The setting up self as our end, puts a nullity upon the true Deity; by paying to ourselves that respect and honour which is due to God, we make the true God as no God. Whosoever makes himself a king of his prince's rights and territories, manifests an intent to throw him out of his government; to choose ourselves as our end is to undeify God, since to be the last end of a rational creature is a right inseparable from the nature of the Deity; and therefore not to set God, but self, always before us, is to acknowledge no being but ourselves to be God.

PART IV.

THE IRRATIONAL CONDUCT OF MAN IN HIS PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

The thoughts of man are more fixed upon the world than upon God---His avidity in pursuit of the world---Addicted to sensual pleasure—Forgetfulness of God in prosperity ---How man debases God—Denial of God—Pride—Abuse of the creatures—Selfish love to God—Why men abstain from some sins—Self-interest in religious duties ---The sin of this---Idolatry---Superstition---Presumption---Unregenerate men have no desire of God---Of remembering him---Conversing with him---The turning to him---Imitating him.

II. MAN would *make any thing* his end and happiness rather than God. An end is so necessary in all our actions, that he deserves not the name of a rational creature, that proposeth not one to himself. This is the distinction between rational creatures and others; they act with a formal intention, whereas other creatures are directed to their end by a natural instinct, and moved by nature to what the other should be moved by reason: when a man therefore acts for that end, which was not intended him by the law of his creation, nor suited to the noble faculties of his soul; he acts contrary to God, overturns his order, and merits no better title than that of an atheist.

A man may be said two ways to make a thing his last end and chief good. *Formally:* when he actually judges

this or that thing to be his chiefest good, and orders all things to it. So man doth not formally judge sin to be good, or any object which is the incentive of sin to be his last end. This cannot be while he hath the exercise of his rational faculties. A man may make a thing his last end and chief good *virtually and implicitly:* when he loves any thing against the command of God, and prefers in the stream of his actions the enjoyment of that before the fruition of God, and lays out more strength and expends more time in the gaining that, than answering the true end of his creation; when he acts so as if something below God could make him happy without God, or that God could not make him happy without the addition of something else. Thus the glutton makes a god of his dainties; the ambitious man of his honour; the incontinent man of his lust; and the covetous man of his wealth; and consequently esteems them as his chiefest good, and the most noble end to which he directs his thoughts. Thus he vilifies and lessens the true God, which can make him happy, in a multitude of false gods, that can only render him miserable. He that loves pleasure more than God, says in his heart there is no God but his pleasure. He that loves his belly more than God, says in his heart there is no God but his belly. Their happiness is not accounted to lie in that God that made the world, but in the pleasure or profit which they make their god. In this, though a created object be the immediate and subordinate term to which we turn, yet principally and ultimately, the affection to it terminates in self; nothing is naturally entertained by us, but as it affects our sense or mingles with some promise of advantage to us.

This is seen, 1. In *the fewer thoughts we have of God than of any thing else.* Did we apprehend God to be our chief good and highest end, should we grudge the pains of a few days thoughts, upon him? Men in their travels are frequently thinking upon their intended stage; but our thoughts run upon new acquisitions to increase our wealth, rear up our families, revenge our injuries, and support our reputation. Trifles possess us, but *God is not in all our thoughts,* seldom the sole object of them,

Psal. 10. 4. We have durable thoughts of transitory things, and flitting thoughts of a durable and eternal good. The covenant of grace engages the whole heart to God, and bars any thing else from engrossing it. But what strangers are God and the souls of most men? Though we have the knowledge of him by creation, yet he is for the most part an unknown God in the relation wherein he stands to us, because a God undelighted in. Hence it is, as one observes,* that because we observe not the ways of God's wisdom, conceive not of him in his vast perfections, nor are stricken with admiration of his goodness, that we have fewer good sacred poems than of any other kind. The wits of men hang the wing when they come to exercise their reasons and fancies about God. Parts and strength are given us, as well as corn and wine to the Israelites, for the service of God; but those are consecrated to some cursed Baal, *Hos.* 2. 8. Like Venus in the poet, we forsake heaven to follow some Adonis.

2. In *the greedy pursuit of the world.* † When we pursue worldly wealth or worldly reputation with more vehemence than the riches of grace, or the favour of God. When we have a foolish imagination, that our happiness consists in them, we prefer earth before heaven, broken cisterns which can hold no water, before an ever-springing fountain of glory and bliss. And, as though there were a defect in God, cannot be content with him as our portion, without an addition of something inferior to him: when we make it our hopes and say to the wedge, *thou art my confidence;* and rejoice more because it is great, and because *our hand hath gotten much,* than in the privilege of communion with God and the promise of an everlasting fruition of him. *Job* 31. 24, 25, 26. This is so gross, that Job joins it with the *idolatry* of the *sun* and *moon,* of which he purifies himself. And the apostle when he mentions covetousness or covetous men; passes it not over without the title of *idolatry* to the vice, and *idolater* to the person. *Col.* 3. 5. *Eph.* 5. 5. In that it

* Jackson vol. book 1. cap. 14. p. 48.

† Quod quisq; præ cæteris petit, summum judicat bonum. Boet. lib. 3. p. 24.

is a preferring clay and dirt as an end more desirable than the original of all goodness, in regard of affection and dependence.

3. In a strong addictedness to sensual pleasures, *Phil.* 3. 19. *Who make their belly their god;* subjecting the truths of God to the maintenance of their luxury. In debasing the higher faculties to project for the satisfaction of the sensitive appetite as their chief happiness; whereby many render themselves no better than a rout of sublimated brutes among men, and gross atheists to God. When men's thoughts run also upon inventing new methods to satisfy their sensual appetites, forsaking the pleasures which are to be had in God, which are the delights of angels, for the satisfaction of brutes. This is an open and unquestionable refusal of God for our end, when our rest is in them, as if they were the chief good, and not God.

4. In paying *a service upon any success in the world, to instruments, more than to God the sovereign author.* When they *sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their drag,* *Heb.* 1. 16. Not that the Assyrian did offer a sacrifice to his arms, but ascribed to them what was due only to God, and appropriated the victory to his forces and arms. The prophet alludes to those that worshipped their warlike instruments, whereby they had attained great victories; and those artificers who worshipped the tools by which they had purchased great wealth, in the stead of God; preferring them as the causes of their happiness before God who governs the world. And are not our affections, upon the receiving of good things, more closely fixed to the instruments of conveyance than to the chief benefactor, from whose coffers they are taken? Do we not more delight in them, and hug them with a greater endearedness, as if all our happiness depended on them, and God were no more than a bare spectator? Just as if when a man were warmed by a beam, he should adore that and not admire the sun that darts it out upon him.

5. In paying a *respect to man more than God.* When in a public attendance on his service, we will not laugh, or be trifling, because men see us; but our hearts shall

be in a ridiculous posture, playing with feathers and trifling fancies, though God see us; as though our happiness consisted in the pleasing of men, and our misery in a respect to God. There is no fool that saith in his heart there is no God, but he sets up something in his heart as a God. This is,

1. *Debasing God in setting up a creature.* It speaks God less amiable than the creature, short of those perfections which some silly sordid thing, which hath engrossed their affections, is possessed with. As if the cause of all being could be transcended by his creature, and a vile lust could equal, yea, surmount the loveliness of God. It is to say to God as the rich to the poor, *James* 2. 3. *Stand thou there, or sit here under my foot-stool.* It is to sink him below the mire of the world, to order him to come down from his glorious throne, and take his place below a contemptible creature, which in regard of its infinite distance is not to be compared with him. It strips God of the love that is due to him by the right of his nature and the greatness of his dignity; and of the trust that is due to him, as the first cause and the chief good, as though he were too feeble and mean to be our blessedness. This is intolerable, to make that which is God's foot-stool, the earth, to climb up into his throne; to set that in our heart which God hath made even below ourselves and put under our feet; to make that which we trample upon, to dispose of the right God hath to our hearts. *. It is worse than if a queen should fall in love with the little image of the prince in the palace, and slight the beauty of his person; and as if the people should adore the foot-steps of a king in the dirt, and turn their backs upon his presence. It more debases God to set up a sin, a lust, a carnal affection, as our chief end. To steal away the honour due to God, and appropriate it to that which is no work of his hands, to that which is loathsome in his sight, hath disturbed his rest, and wrung out his just breath to kindle a hell for its eternal lodging, a God dishonouring and a soul murdering lust, is worse

* Noremberg de adorat. p. 30.

than to prefer Barabbas before Christ. The baser the thing, the worse is the injury to him with whom we would associate it. If it were some generous principle, a thing useful to the world, that we place in an equality with, or superiority above him; though it were a vile usage, yet it were not altogether so criminal. But to gratify some unworthy appetite, with the displeasure of the Creator, something below the rational nature of man, much more infinitely below the excellent majesty of God, is a more unworthy usage of him. To advance one of the most virtuous nobles in a kingdom as a mark of our service and subjection, is not so dishonourable to a despised prince, as to take a wretched beggar, or a putrid carcase to place in his throne. Creeping things, abominable beasts, the Egyptian idols, cats, and crocodiles, were greater abominations, and a greater despite done to God, than the *image of jealousy at the gate of the altar*, *Ezek.* 8. 5, 6, 10.

And let not any excuse themselves, that it is but one lust or one creature which is preferred as the end. Is not he an idolater that worships the sun or moon, that worships one idol, as well as he that worships the whole host of heaven? The inordinancy of the heart to one lust may imply a stronger contempt of him than if a legion of lusts possessed the heart. It argues a greater disesteem, when he shall be slighted for a single vanity. The depth of Esau's prophaneness in contemning his birth-right, and God in it, is aggravated by his selling it for *one morsel of meat*, *Heb.* 12. 16, and that none of the daintiest, none of the costliest, *a mess of pottage;* implying, had he parted with it at a greater rate, and that otherwise, it had been more tolerable, and his prophaneness more excusable. And it is reckoned as a high aggravation of the corruption of the Israelite judges, *Amos* 2. 6, *That they sold the poor for a pair of shoes;* that is, that they would betray the cause of the poor for a bribe of no greater value, than might purchase them a pair of shoes. To place any one thing as our chief end, though never so light, doth not excuse. He that will not stick to break with God for a trifle, a small pleasure, will leap the hedge upon a greater temptation. Nay, and if wealth,

riches, friends, and the best thing in the world, our own lives, be preferred before God, as our chief happiness and end but one moment, it is an infinite wrong; because the infinite goodness and excellency of God is denied. As though the creature or lust we love, or our own life which we prefer in that short moment before him, had a goodness in itself, superior to, and more desirable than, the blessedness in God: and though it should be but one minute, and a man in all the periods of his days both before and after that failure, should actually and intentionally prefer God before all other things; yet he doth him an infinite wrong, because God in every moment is infinitely good, and absolutely desirable, and can never cease to be good, and cannot have the least shadow or change in him and his perfections.

2. It is a *denying* of God. *Job* 31. 26, 27, 28. *If I beheld the sun when it shined, and the moon walking in its brightness, and my heart had been secretly enticed, or my mouth had kissed my hand; this also were iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the Lord above.* This denial of God is not only the act of an open idolater, but the consequent of a secret confidence, and immoderate joy in worldly goods; this denial of God is to be referred to ver. 24. 25, When a man saith to *gold, thou art my confidence,* and rejoices because his wealth is great, he denies that God which is superior to all, and the proper object of trust. Both idolatries are coupled here together; that which hath wealth, and that which has those glorious creatures in heaven for its object: And though some may think it a light sin, yet the crime being of deeper guilt, a denial of God deserves a severer punishment, and falls under the sentence of the just Judge of all the earth; under that notion, which Job intimates in those words, *this also were an iniquity to be punished by the Judge.*

The *kissing the hand* to the *sun, moon,* or any idol, was an external sign of religious worship among those and other nations. This is far less than an inward hearty confidence, and an affectionate trust: if the

motion of the hand be, much more is the affection of the heart to an impure vile creature, or a brutish pleasure, a denial of God, and a kind of an abjuring of him, since the supreme affection of the soul is undoubtedly and solely the right of the sovereign Creator, and not to be given in common to others, as the outward gesture may in a way of civil respect. Nothing that is a honour peculiar to God, can be given to a creature, without a plain exclusion of God to be God; it being a disowning the rectitude and excellency of his nature. If God should command a creature such a love, and such a confidence in any thing inferior to him; he would deny himself his own glory; he would deny himself to be the most excellent being. Can the Romanists be free from this, when they call the cross *Spem unicam*, and say to the virgin, *In te Domino speravi*, as *Bonaventure*, *&c.* Good reason therefore have worldlings and sensualists, persons of immoderate fondness to any thing in the world, to reflect upon themselves; since, though they own the being of a God, they are guilty of so great disrespect to him, that cannot be excused from the title of an unworthy atheism. And those that are renewed by the spirit of God, may here see ground of daily humiliation for the frequent and too common excursions of their souls in creature confidences and affections, whereby they fall under the charge of an act of practical atheism, though they may be free from the habit of it.

The THIRD thing is, man would make himself *the end of all creatures.* Man would sit in the *seat of God*, and set *his heart as the heart of God*, as the Lord saith of Tyrus, *Ezek.* 28. 2. What is the consequence of this; but to be esteemed the chief good, and end of other creatures? A thing, that the heart of God cannot but be set upon, it being an inseparable right of the Deity; who must deny himself, if he deny this affection of the heart. Since it is the nature of man derived from this root, to desire to be equal with God, it follows that he desires no creature should be equal with him, but subservient to his ends and his glory.

He that would make himself God, would have the honour proper to God; he that thinks himself worthy of his own supreme affection, thinks himself worthy to be the object of the supreme affection of others; whosoever counts himself the chief good and last end, would have the same place in the thoughts of others. Nothing is more natural to man, than a desire to have his own judgment, the rule and measure of the judgments and opinions of the rest of mankind. He that sets himself in the place of the prince, by that act challenges all the prerogatives and dues belonging to the prince; and apprehending himself fit to be a king, apprehends himself also worthy of the homage and fealty of the subjects. He that loves himself chiefly, and all other things and persons for himself, would make himself the end of all creatures. It hath not been once or twice only in the world, that some vain princes have assumed to themselves the title of gods, and caused divine adoration to be given to them, and altars to smoke with sacrifices for their honour: what hath been practised by one, is by nature seminally in all; we would have all pay an obedience to us, and give to us the esteem that is due to God.

This is evident, 1. In *pride*. When we entertain an high opinion of ourselves, and act for our own reputation, we dispossess God from our own hearts; and while we would have our fame to be in every man's mouth, and be admired in the hearts of men, we would chase God out of the hearts of others, and deny his glory a residence any where else; that our glory should reside more in their minds than the glory of God; that their thoughts should be filled with our achievements, more than the works and excellency of God, with our image and not with the divine. Pride would rival God in the affections of others, and shut God out of their souls; and by the same reason, that man does thus in the place where he lives, he would do so in the whole world, and press the whole creation from the service of their true Lord, to his own service. Every proud man would be counted by others as he

counts himself, the highest piece of goodness; and be adored by others, as much as he adores and admires himself. No proud man in his self-love and self admiration, thinks himself in an error; and if he be worthy of his own admiration, he thinks himself worthy of the highest esteem of others; that they should value him above themselves, and value themselves only for him. What did Nebuchadnezzar intend, by setting up a golden image, and commanding all his subjects to worship it, upon the highest penalty he could inflict; but that all should aim only at the pleasing his humour?

2. In using the creatures *contrary to the end God has appointed.* God created the world and all things in it, as steps whereby men might ascend to a prospect of him, and the acknowledgment of his glory; and we would use them to dishonour God, and gratify ourselves. He appointed them to supply our necessities, and support our rational delights; and we use them to cherish our sinful lusts. We wring groans from the creatures in diverting them from their true scope, to one of our own fixing, when we use them not in his service, but purely for our own, and turn those things he created for himself to be instruments of rebellion against him to serve our turns; and hereby endeavour to defeat the ends of God in them, to establish our own ends by them. This is a high dishonour to God, a sacrilegious undermining of his glory;* to reduce what God hath made to serve our own glory, and our own pleasure. It perverts the whole order of the world, and directs it to another end than what God hath constituted; to another intention contrary to the intention of God; and thus man makes himself a God by his own authority. As all things were made by God, so they are for God: but while we aspire to the end of the creation, we deny and envy God the honour of being Creator. We cannot make ourselves the chief end of the creatures against God's order, but we imply thereby, that we were their first principle; for

* Sabunde tit. 200. p. 352.

if we lived under a sense of the Creator of them while we enjoy them for our use, we should return the glory to the right owner.

This is *diabolical;* though the devil for his first affecting an authority in heaven, has been hurled down from the state of an angel of light, into that of darkness, vileness, and misery, to be the most accursed creature living; yet he still aspires to subvert the authority of God, contrary to the knowledge of the impossiblity of success in it: neither the terrors he feels, nor the future torments he expects, do a jot abate his ambition to be competitor with his Creator. How often hath he since his first sin, arrogated to himself the honour of a God from the blind world, and attempted to make the son of God by particular worship, count him as the chiefest good and benefactor of the world? *Matt.* 4. 9. Since all men by nature are the serpent's seed, they have something of this venom in their natures, as well as others of his qualities. We see that there may be, and is, a prodigious atheism lurking under the belief of a God. The devil knows there is a God, but acts like an atheist, and so do his children.

Fourthly. Man would make himself *the end of God.* This necessarily follows upon the former. Whosoever makes himself his own law and his own end in the place of God, would make God the subject in making himself the sovereign; he that steps into the throne of a prince, sets the prince at his foot-stool; and while he assumes the prince's prerogative, demands a subjection from him. The order of the creation, has been inverted by the entrance of sin.* God implanted an affection in man with a double aspect, the one to pitch upon God, the other to respect ourselves; but with this *proviso,* that our affection to God should be infinite, in regard of the object, and center in him as the chief happiness and highest end. Our affections to ourselves should be finite, and refer ultimately to God as the original of our being; but sin hath turned man's affections wholly to himself:

* Pascal Pens. § 30. p. 294.

Whereas he should love God first, and himself in order to God; he now loves himself first, and God in order to himself; love to God is lost, and love to self hath usurped the throne. As God by creation *put all things under the feet of man*, reserving the heart for himself; man by corruption hath dispossessed God of his heart, and put him under his own feet. We often intend ourselves, when we pretend the honour of God, and make God and religion subservient to some designs we have in hand; make our Creator a tool for our end.

This is evident, (1.) In our loving God, *because of some self-pleasing benefits distributed by him.* There is in men, a kind of natural love to God; but it is only a secondary one, because God gives them the good things of this world, spreads their table, fills their cup, stuffs their coffers, and does them some good turns by unexpected providences. This is not an affection to God for the unbounded excellency of his own nature, but for his beneficence, as he opens his hand for them; an affection to themselves, and those creatures, their gold, their honour, which their hearts are most fixed upon; without any real spiritual inclination that God should be glorified by them in the use of those mercies. It is rather a disowning of God, than any love to him; because it postpones God to those things they love him for. This would appear to be no love, if God should cease to be their benefactor, and deal with them as a Judge; if he should change his outward smiles into afflicting frowns; and not only shut his hand, but strip them of what he sent them. The motive of their love being expired, the affection raised by it must cease for want of fewel to feed it; so that God is beholden to sordid creatures of no value, but as they are his creatures, for most of the love the sons of men pretend to him. The devil speaks truth of most men, though not of Job, when he says, *They love not God for nought;* but while he makes a hedge about them and their families, whilst he blesseth the works of their hands, and increaseth their honour in the land. It is like Peter's sharp reproof of his Master, when he spake of the

ill usage, even to death, he was to meet with at Jerusalem; *This shall not be unto thee.* It was as much out of love to himself, as zeal for his master's interest, knowing his master could not be in such a storm without some drops lighting upon himself. All the apostacies of men in the world are witnesses to this: they fawn whilst they may have a prosperous profession, but will not bear the lightest cross for the interest of God; they would partake of his blessings, but not endure the prick of a lance for him; as those that admired the miracles of our Saviour, and shrunk at his sufferings. A time of trial discovers these mercenary souls to be more lovers of themselves than their maker. This is a pretended love of friendship to God, but a real love to a lust, only to gain by God. But a good man is of a contrary temper: "Quench hell, burn heaven," said a holy man, "I will love and fear my God."

(2.) It is evident in abstinence from some sins, not because they offend God, but *because they are against the interest of some other beloved corruption*, or a bar to something men hunt after in the world. When temperance is cherished, not to honour God, but preserve an infirm body; prodigality forsaken, out of a humour of avarice; uncleanness forsaken, not out of a hatred of lust, but love to their money; declining a denial of the interest and truth of God, not out of affection to them, but an ambitious zeal for their own reputation. There is a kind of conversion from sin, when God is not made the term of it, *Jer.* 4. 1. *If thou wilt return, oh* Israel, *return unto me saith the Lord.* * When we forbear to sin as dogs do to eat their meat, not out of a hatred of the food but the fear of eating; these are as wicked in their abstaining from sin, as others are in their furious committing it. Nothing of the honour of God and the end of his appointments is indeed in all this, but the conveniences self gathers from them. Again, many of the motives the generality of the world use to their friends and relations to

* Trap on Gen. p. 149.

draw them from vice, are drawn from self, and used to prop up natural or sinful self in them. "Come, reform yourself, take other courses, you will injure your reputation and be despicable; you will destroy your estate and commence a beggar; your family will be undone, and you may die in a prison." Not laying close to them the duty they owe to God, the dishonour which accrues to him by their unworthy courses, and the ingratitude to the God of their mercies; not that the other motives are to be laid aside and slighted: *mint* and *cummin* may be tithed, but the weightier concerns are not to be omitted. But this shews that self is the bias, not only of men in their own course, but in their dealings with others: what should be subordinate to the honour of God, and the duty we owe to him, is made superior.

(3.) It is evident, in performing duties merely for a *selfish interest*. Making ourselves the end of religious actions, paying a homage to that, while we pretend to render it to God, *Zach.* 7. 5. *Did you at all fast unto me, even unto me?* Things ordained by God may fall in with carnal ends affected by ourselves; and then religion is not kept up by any interest of God in the conscience, but the interest of self in the heart. We then sanctify not the name of God in the duty, but gratify ourselves; God may be the object, self is the end, and a heavenly object is made subservient to a carnal design. Hypocrisy passes a compliment on God, and is called flattery, *Psal.* 78. 36. *They did flatter him with their lips, &c.* They gave him good words for their own preservation. Flattery in the old notion among the heathens, is a vice more peculiarly to serve our own turn, and purvey for our own gratification. They knew they could not subsist without God, and therefore gave him good words, that he might spare them, and make provision for them. Israel *is an empty vine, Hos.* 10. 1. a vine say some, with large branches and few clusters, but *brings forth fruit to himself;* while they professed love to God with their lips, it was that God should promote their covetous designs, and preserve their wealth and grandeur. In which respect a hypocrite may be well termed a religious atheist, an atheist masked

with religion. The chief arguments which prevail with many to perform some duties and appear religious, are the same that Hamor and Shechem used to the people of their city to submit to circumcision, viz. the engrossing of more wealth, *Gen.* 34. 21, 22, *If every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised, shall not their cattle and their substance, and every beast of theirs be ours?*

This is seen, 1. In unweildiness to religious duties, *where self is not concerned.* With what lively thoughts will many approach to God, when a revenue may be brought in to support their own ends? But when the concerns of God only are in it, the duty is not the delight, but the clog; such feeble devotions that warm not the soul, unless there be something of self to give strength and heat to them. Jonah was sick of his work, and run from God, because he thought he should get no honour by his message; God's mercy will discredit his prophecy. Thoughts of disadvantage cut the very sinews of service. You may as well persuade a merchant to venture all his estate upon the inconstant waves without hopes of gain, as prevail with a natural man to be serious in duty, without expectation of some warm advantage. *What profit should we have if we pray to him?* is the natural question, *Job* 21. 15. *What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin? Job* 35. 3. I shall have more good by my sin than by my service. It is for God that I dance before the ark, saith David, therefore I *will be more vile*, 2 *Sam.* 6. 2. It is for self that I pray, saith a natural man, therefore I will be more ardent. The ordinances of God are observed only as a point of interest, and prayer is often most fervent when it is least godly, and most selfish. Carnal ends and affections will pour out lively expressions. If there be no delight in the means that lead to God, there is no delight in God himself; because love is *appetitus unionis*, a desire of union; and where the object is desirable, the means that brings us to it would be delightful too.

2. In calling upon God only *in a time of necessity.* How officious will men be in affliction, to that God whom

they neglect in their prosperity? *When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired after God, and they remembered that God was their rock, Psal.* 78. 34. They remembered him under the scourge, and forgat him under his smiles; they visit the throne of grace, knock loud at heaven's gates, and give God no rest for their early and importunate devotions when under distress; but when their desires are answered, and the rod removed, they stand aloof from him, and rest upon their own foundation, as *Jer.* 2. 31, *We are lords, we will come no more unto thee.* When we have need of him, he shall find us suppliants at his gate; and when we have served our turn, he hears no more of us. Like Noah's dove sent out of the ark, that returned to him when she found no rest on the earth, but came not back when she found a footing elsewhere. How often do men apply themselves to God, when they have some business for him to do for them? And then too, they are loath to put it solely into his hand, to manage it for his own honour; but they presume to be his directors, that he may manage it for their glory. Self spurs men on to the throne of grace; they desire to be furnished with some mercy they want, or to have the clouds of some judgments which they fear, blown over. This is not affection to God, but to ourselves. As the Romans worshipped a quartan ague as a goddess, and *Timorem & Pallorem*, fear and paleness, as gods; not out of any affection they had to the disease or the passion, but for fear to receive any hurt by them.

Again, when we have gained the mercy we need, how little do we warm our souls with the consideration of that God that gave it, or lay out the mercy in his service? We are importunate to have him our friend in our necessities, and are ungratefully careless of him, and his injuries, he suffers by us or others: when he hath discharged us from the rock where we stuck, we leave him, as having no more need of him, and as able to do well enough without him. As if we were petty gods ourselves, and only wanted a lift from him at first. This is not to glorify God as God, but as our servant; this is

not honouring God, but self seeking: he would hardly beg at God's door, if he could pleasure himself without him.

3. In begging his *assistance to our own projects.* When we lay the plot of our own affairs, and then come to God, not for counsel but blessing; self only shall give us counsel how to act; but because we believe there is a God that governs the world, we will desire him to contribute success. God is not consulted with, till the counsel of self be fixed; then God must be the executor of our will; self must be the principal, and God the instrument to effect what we have contrived. It is worse when we beg of God to favour some sinful aim; the psalmist implies this, *Psal.* 66. 18, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* Iniquity regarded as the aim in prayer, renders the prayer ineffectual, and the suppliant an atheist, in debasing God to back his lust by his holy providence. The disciples had determined revenge; and because they could not act it without their master, they would have him to be their second in their vindictive passion, *Luke* 9: 55, *Call for fire from heaven.* We scarce seek God, till we have modelled the whole contrivance in our own minds, and resolved upon the methods of performance; as though there were not a fulness of wisdom in God to guide us in our resolves, as well as power to breathe success upon them.

4. In *impatience upon the refusal of our desires.* How often do men's spirits rise against God, when he steps not in with the assistance they want? If the glory of God swayed more with them than their private interest, they would let God be judge of his own glory, and rather magnify his wisdom, than complain of his want of goodness. Selfish hearts will charge God with neglect of them, if he be not as quick in their supplies as they are in their desires; like those in *Isa.* 58. 3. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not; wherefore have we afflicted our souls and thou takest no knowledge?* When we aim at God's glory in our importunities, we shall fall down in humble submissions when he denies us: whereas self rises up in bold expostulations, as if God

were our servant, and had neglected the service he owed us, not to come at our call. We overvalue the satisfactions of self above the honour of God. Besides, if what we desire be a sin, our impatience at a refusal is more intolerable: it is an anger, that God will not lay aside his holiness to serve our corruption.

5. In *the actual aims* men have in their duties. In prayer for temporal things, when we desire health for our own ease, wealth for our own sensuality, strength for our revenge, children for the increase of our family, gifts for our applause, as Simon Magus did the Holy Ghost; when some of those ends are aimed at, this is to desire God not to serve himself of us, but to be a servant to our worldly interest, our vain glory, the greatening of our names, *&c.* In spiritual mercies begged for; when pardon of sin is desired only for our own security from eternal vengeance; sanctification only to make us fit for everlasting blessedness; peace of conscience only that we may lead our lives more comfortably in the world, when we have no actual intentions for the glory of God, or when our thoughts of God's honour are exceeded by the aims of self-advantage. Not but that as God hath pressed us to those things by motives drawn from the blessedness derived to ourselves by them, so we may desire them with a respect to ourselves; but this respect must be contained within the due bounds, in subordination to the glory of God, not above it, nor in an equal balance with it. * That which is nourishing or medicinal in the first or second degree, is in the fourth or fifth degree mere destructive poison.

Let us consider it seriously; though a duty be heavenly, does not some base end defile us in it? How is it with our *confessions of sin?* Are they not more to procure our pardon, than to shame ourselves before God, or to be freed from the chains that hinder us from bringing him the glory for which we were created; or more to partake of his benefits, than to honour him in acknowledging the rights of his justice? Do we not bewail sin as

* Gurnal, part 3. page 337.

it hath ruined us, not as it opposed the holiness of God? Do we not shuffle with God, and confess one sin, while we reserve another, as if we would allure God by declaring our dislike of one, to give us liberty to commit wantonness with another; not to abhor ourselves, but to daub with God. Is it any better in our *private and family* worship? Are not such assemblies frequented by some, where some upon whom they have a dependance may eye them, and have a better opinion of them, and affection to them? If God were the sole end of our hearts; would they not be as glowing under the sole eye of God, as our tongues or carriages are seemingly serious under the eye of man? Are not family duties performed by some that their voices may be heard, and their reputation supported, among godly neighbours? Is not the *charity* of many men tainted with this end *self?* as the pharisees were, while they set the miserable object before them, but not the Lord; bestowing alms, not so much upon the necessities of the people, as the friendship we owe them for some particular respects; or casting our bread upon those waters which stream down in the sight of the world, that our alms may be visible to them and commended by them; or when we think to oblige God to pardon our transgressions; as if we merited it and heaven too at his hands, by bestowing a few pence upon indigent persons. And is it not the same with the *reproofs* of men? Are not heat and anger carried out with full sail when our worldly interest is prejudiced and becalmed in the concerns of God? Do not many masters reprove their servants with more vehemence for the neglect of their trade and business, than the neglect of divine duties; and that upon religious arguments, pretending the honour of God that they may mind their own interest? But when they are negligent in what they owe to God, no noise is made, they pass without rebuke. Is not this to make God and religion a scale to their own ends? It is a part of atheism, not to regard the injuries done to God, as Tiberius, * "Let God's wrongs be looked to, or cared for by himself."

* Dei injuria Deo curæ.

Is it not thus in our seeming *zeal for religion?* As Demetrius, and the Craftsmen at Ephesus cried up aloud the greatness of *Diana of the Ephesians;* not out of any true zeal they had for her, but their gain; which was increased by the confluence of her worshippers, and the sale of her own shrines, *Acts* 19. 24, 28.

(4.) In making use of the name of God to *countenance our sin.* This we do when we set up an opinion that is a friend to our lusts, and then search the scripture to find arguments to support it, and authorize our practices; and when men will thank God for what they have got by unlawful means, fathering the fruit of their cheating craft, and the simplicity of their chapmen upon God: crediting their cozenage by his name, as men do brass money with a thin plate of silver, and the stamp and image of the prince. The Jews urge the law of God for the crucifying his son, *John* 19. 7, *We have a law, and by our law he ought to die:* and would make him a party in their private revenge. * Thus often when we have faultered in some actions, we wipe our mouths, as if we sought God more than our own interest, prostituting the sacred name and honour of God, either to hatch or defend some unworthy lust against his word.

Is not all this a high degree of atheism? It is a *vilifying* God, an abuse of the highest good: other sins subject the creature and outward things to them; but acting in religious services for self, subjects not only the highest concernments of men's souls, but the Creator himself to the creature: nay, it is to make God contribute to that which is the pleasure of the devil: a greater slight, than to cast the gifts of a prince to a herd of swine. It were more excusable to serve ourselves of God upon the higher accounts, such that materially conduce to his glory; but it is an intolerable wrong, to make him and his ordinances caterers for our sensual appetites as they did. *Hos.* 8, 13. They sacrificed the נרכות of which the offerer might eat; not out of any reference to God, but love to their gluttony; not to please him, but feast them-

* Sanderson's Serm. part 2. p. 158.

selves. The belly was truly made their God, when God was served only in order to the belly: as though the blessed God had his being, and his ordinances were enjoined only to please their foolish and wanton appetites: as though the work of God were only to patronize unrighteous ends, and be as bad as themselves, and become a pander to their corrupt affections. Because it is a vilifying of God, it is an *undeifying or dethroning God.* It is acting as if *we* were the Lord's, and God our vassal; a setting up those secular ends in the place of God, who ought to be our ultimate end in every action; to whom all glory is as due, as his mercy to us is utterly unmerited by us. He that thinks to cheat and put the fool upon God by his pretences, does not heartily believe there is such a Being. He could not have the notion of a God, without that of omniscience and justice; an eye to see the cheat, and an arm to punish it. The notion of the one would direct him in the manner of his services, and the sense of the other would scare him from the cherishing his unworthy ends. He that serves God with a sole respect to himself, is prepared for any idolatry; his religion will warp with the times and his interest; he will deny the true God for an idol, when his worldly interest advises him to it; and pay the same reverence to the basest image, which he pretends now to pay to God. As the Israelites were as real for idolatry under their basest princes, as they were pretenders to the true religion under those that were pious.

Before I come to the use of this, give me leave to evince this practical atheism by two other considerations:

1. *Unworthy imaginations of God. The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.*: that is, he is not such a God as you report him to be; this is meant by their being *corrupt*, in the 2d verse corrupt being taken for playing the idolater, *Exod.* 32. 7. We cannot comprehend God; if we could, we should cease to be finite; and because we cannot comprehend him, we erect strange images of him in our fancies and affections. And since guilt came upon us, because we cannot root out the notions of God, we would debase the majesty and nature of God, that we

may have some ease in our consciences, and lie down with some comfort in the sparks of our own kindling. This is universal in men by nature. *God is not in all his thoughts, Psal.* 10. 4. Not in any of his thoughts according to the excellency of his nature, and greatness of his majesty. As the heathen did not glorify God as God, so neither do they conceive of God as God. They are all infected with some ill opinion of him, thinking him not so holy, powerful, just, good as he is, and as the natural force of a human understanding might arrive to. We join a new notion of God in our vain fancies, and represent him not as he is, but as we would have him to be, fit for our own use, and suited to our own pleasure. We set that active power of imagination on work, and there comes out a god, say, a *calf*, whom we own for a notion of God. Adam cast him into so narrow a mould, as to think that himself, who had newly sprouted up by his almighty power, was fit to be his competitor in knowledge, and had vain hopes to grasp as much as infinity. If he in his first declining begun to have such a conceit, it is no doubt but we have as bad under a mass of corruption. When holy Agur speaks of God, he cries out that he had not *the understanding of a man, nor the knowledge of the holy, Pro.* 30. 2, 3. He did not think rationally of God as man might by his strength at his first creation. There are as many carved images of God as there are minds of men, and as monstrous shapes as those corruptions into which they would transform him.

Hence sprang *idolatry.* Vain imaginations first set afloat and kept up this in the world. Vain imaginations of the God whose *glory they changed into the image of corruptible man. Rom.* 1. 21, 23. They had set up vain images of him in their fancy, before they set up idolatrous representations of him in their temples; the likening him to those idols of wood, and stone, and various metals, were the fruit of an idea erected in their own minds. This is a mighty debasing the divine nature, and rendering him no better, than that base and stupid matter they make the visible object of their adoration; equalling him with those base crea-

tures they think worthy to be the representations of him. Yet how far did this crime spread itself in all corners of the world, not only among the more barbarous and ignorant, but the more polished and civilized nations! Judea only, where God had placed the ark of his presence, being free from it, in some intervals of time only after some sweeping judgment. And though they gave up their idols under some sharp scourge, they sought them again after the heavens were cleared over their heads. The whole book of Judges makes mention of it: and though an evangelical light hath chased that idolatry away from a great part of the world; yet the principle remaining, coins more spiritual idols in the heart, which are brought before God in acts of worship.

Hence *all superstition received its rise and growth.* When we mint a God according to our own complexion, like to us in mutable and various passions, soon angry and soon appeased, it is no wonder that we invent ways of pleasing him after we have offended him; and think to expiate the sin of our souls, by some melancholy devotions and self chastisements. Superstition is nothing else but an unscriptural and unrevealed dread of God. * When they imagined him a rigorous, and severe master, they cast about for ways to appease him whom they thought so hard to be pleased; a very mean thought of him, as if a slight and pompous devotion could as easily bribe and flatter him out of his rigours, as a few good words or baubles could please and quiet little children; and whatsoever pleased us, could please a God infinitely above us. Such narrow conceits had the Philistines, when they thought to still the anger of the God of Israel, whom they thought they possessed in the ark, with the present of a few golden mice. 1 *Sam.* 6. 3, 4. All the superstition this day living in the world is built upon this foundation. So natural it is to man to bring God down to his own imaginations rather than raise his imaginations up to God. Hence arises also the diffidence of his mercy, though they repent; measuring God by the contracted

* Δεσιδαιμονία.

models of their own spirits; as though his nature were as difficult to pardon their offences against him, as they are to remit wrongs done to themselves.

Hence also springs all *presumption*, the common disease of the world. All the wickedness in the world, which is nothing but presuming upon God, rises from the ill interpretations of the goodness of God, breaking out upon them in the works of creation and providence: the corruption of man's nature engendered by those notions of goodness a monstrous birth of vain imaginations. Not of themselves primarily, but of God; whence arose all that folly and darkness in their minds and conversations, *Rom.* 1. 20, 21. They glorified him *not as God*, but according to themselves, imagined him good that themselves might be bad; fancied him so indulgent, as to neglect his own honour for their sensuality. How doth the unclean person represent him to his own thoughts, but as a goat; the murderer as a tiger; the sensual person as a swine; while they fancy a God indulgent to their crimes without their repentance? As the image on the seal is stamped upon the wax, so the thoughts of the heart are printed upon the actions. God's patience is apprehended to be an approbation of their vices, and from the consideration of his forbearance, they fashion a God that they believe will smile upon their crimes. They imagine a God that plays with them; and though he threatens, doth it only to scare, but means not as he speaks; a God they fancy like themselves, that would do as they would do, not be angry for what they count a light offence, *Psal.* 50. 21, *Thou thoughtest I was such a one as thyself:* That God and they were exactly alike as two tallies.* "Our wilful misapprehensions of God are the cause of our misbehaviour in all his worship: Our slovenly and lazy services tell him to his face what slight thoughts and apprehensions we have of him." Compare superstition and presumption together. Superstition arises from terrifying misapprehensions of God; presumption from self-pleasing thoughts. One represents him only as

* Gurnal, part 2. p. 245, 246.

rigorous, and the other as careless; one makes us over officious in serving him by our own rules; and the other over bold in offending him, according to our humours. The want of a true notion of God's justice makes some men slight him; and the want of a true apprehension of his goodness makes others too servile in their approaches to him: one makes us careless of duties, and the other makes us look on them rather as physic than food, an unsupportable penance, than a desirable privilege. In this case, hell is the principle of duty performed to heaven. The *superstitious* man believes God hath scarce mercy to pardon; the *presumptuous* man believes he hath no such perfection as justice to punish. The one makes him insignificant to what he desires, kindness and goodness; the other renders him insignificant to what he fears, his vindictive justice: so that between the idolater, the superstitious, and the presumptuous person, God must appear like no God in the world.

These unworthy imaginations of God are likewise a *vilifying* of him; debasing the Creator, to be a creature of their own fancies; putting their own stamp upon him; and fashioning him not according to that beautiful image he impressed upon them by creation, but the defaced image they inherit by their fall, and which is worse, the image of the devil which spread itself over them at their revolt and apostacy. Were it possible to see a picture of God, according to the fancies of men, it would be the most monstrous being, such a God that never was, nor ever can be. We honour God when we have worthy opinions of him suitable to his nature; when we conceive of him as a Being of unbounded loveliness and perfection: we detract from him when we ascribe to him such qualities as would be a horrible disgrace to a wise and good man; as injustice and impurity. Thus men debase God when they invert his order, and would create him according to their image, as he first created them according to his own; and think him not worthy to be a God, unless he fully answer the mould into which they would cast him, and

be what is unworthy of his nature. Men do not conceive of God as he would have them, but he must be what they would have him, one of their own shaping.

This is *worse than idolatry.* The grossest idolater commits not a crime so heinous, by changing his glory into the image of creeping things and senseless creatures, as the imagining God to be as one of our sinful selves, and likening him to those images, we erect in our fancies. One makes him an earthly God, like an earthly creature; the other fancies him an unjust and impure God, like a *wicked* creature; one sets up an image of him in the earth, which is his foot-stool; the other sets up an image of him in the heart, which ought to his be throne.

It is *worse than absolute atheism,* or a denial of God. *Dignius credimus non esse, quodcunque non ita fuerit, ut esse deberet,* was the opinion of Tertullian. * It is more commendable to think him such a one as is inconsistent with his nature. Better to deny his existence, than deny his perfection. No wise man but would rather have his memory rot, than be accounted infamous; and would be more obliged to him that should deny that ever he had a being in the world, than to say he did indeed live, but he was a sot, a debauchee, and a man not to be trusted. When we apprehend God deceitful in his promises, unrighteous in his threatenings, unwilling to pardon upon repentance, or resolved to pardon notwithstanding impenitence: these are things either unworthy of the nature of God, or contrary to that revelation he hath given of himself. Better for a man never to have been born, than be for ever miserable; so better to be thought no God, than represented as impotent or negligent, unjust or deceitful; which are more contrary to the nature of God, than hell can be to the greatest criminal. In this sense perhaps the apostle affirms the Gentiles, *Eph.* 2. 12, to be such as are *without God in the world;* as being more atheists in adoring God under such notions, as they commonly did, than if they had acknowledged no God at all.

2. This is evident by our natural desire to be distant

* Tertul. cont. Maxim. lib. 1. cap. 2.

from him, and *unwillingness to have any acquaintance with him.* Sin set us first at a distance from God; and every new act of gross sin estranges us more from him, and indisposes us more for him: it makes us both afraid and ashamed to be near him. Sensual men, that Job speaks of, were of this frame, *Job.* 21. 7, 8, 9, 14. 15. *verses.* Where grace reigns, the nearer to God, the more vigorous the motion; the nearer any thing approaches to us that is the object of our desires, the more eagerly do we press forward to it. But our blood riseth at the approaches of any thing to which we have an aversion: we have naturally a loathing of God's coming to us, or our return to him; we seek not after him as our happiness; and when he offers himself, we like it not, but put a disgrace upon him in chusing other things before him. God and we are naturally at as great a distance, as light and darkness, life and death, heaven and hell. The stronger impression of God any thing hath, the more we fly from it. The glory of God in reflection upon the face of Moses, filled the Israelites with fear; they who had desired God to speak to them by Moses, when they saw a signal impression of God upon his countenance, were afraid to come near him, as they were before unwilling to come near to God, *Exod.* 34. 30. Not that the blessed God is in his own nature a frightful object; but our own guilt renders him so to us, and ourselves indisposed to converse with him; as the light of the sun is as irksome to a distempered eye, as it is in its own nature desirable to a sound one. The saints themselves have had so much frailty, that they have cried out, that they were undone, if they had any more than ordinary discoveries of God made unto them; as if they wished him more remote from them. Vileness cannot endure the splendour of majesty, nor guilt the glory of a judge.

We have naturally, 1. No desire of *remembering* him, 2. or *converse* with him, 3. or thorough return to him, 4. or close imitation of him: as if there were not any such being as God in the world; or as if we wished there were none at all; so feeble and spiritless are our thoughts of the being of a God.

1. No desire for the *remembrance of him.* How delightful are other things in our minds? How burdensome the memorials of God, from whom we have our being? With what pleasure do we contemplate the nature of creatures; even of flies and toads; while our minds tire in the search of him, who hath bestowed upon us our knowing and meditating faculties? Though God shews himself to us in every creature; in the meanest weed, as well as the highest heavens, and is more apparent in them to our reasons than themselves can be to our sense; yet though we see them, we will not behold God in them. We will view them to please our sense, to improve our reason in their natural perfections; but pass by the consideration of God's perfections so visibly beaming from them. Thus we play the beasts and atheists in the very exercise of reason, and neglect our Creator to gratify our sense; as though the pleasure of that were more desirable than the knowledge of God. The desire of our souls is not towards *his name and the remembrance of him, Isa.* 26. 8, when we set not ourselves in a posture to feast our souls with deep and serious meditations of him, have a thought of him only by the bye and away, as if we were afraid of too intimate acquaintance with him.

Are not the thoughts of God rather our invaders than our guests, seldom invited to reside and take up their home in our hearts? Have we not when they have broke in upon us, bid them *depart from us, Job* 22. 17, and warned them to approach no more, dismissing them as soon as we could, and were glad when they were gone? And when they have departed, have we not often been afraid they should return again upon us, and therefore looked about for other inmates; things not good, or if good, infinitely below God, to possess the room of our hearts before any thoughts of him should appear again? Have we not often been glad of excuses to shake off present thoughts of him; and when we have wanted real ones, found out pretences to keep God and our hearts at a distance? Is not this a part of atheism to be so unwilling to employ our faculties about the giver of them, to refuse to exercise them in a way of grateful remem

brance of him; as though they were none of his gift, but our own acquisition; as though the God that truly gave them, had no right to them; and he that thinks on us every day in a way of Providence, were not worthy to be thought on by us in a way of special remembrance? And do not the best, that love the remembrance of him, and abhor this natural averseness, find, that when they would think of God, many things tempt them and turn them to think elsewhere? Do they not find their apprehensions too feeble, their motions too dull, and the impressions too slight? This natural atheism is spread over human nature.

2. No desire of *converse* with him. The word remember, in the command for keeping holy the sabbath-day, including all the duties of the day, and the choicest of our lives, implies our natural unwillingness to them, and forgetfulness of them. God's pressing this command with more reasons than the rest, manifests that man hath no heart for spiritual duties. There is no spiritual duty, which sets us immediately face to face with God, but in the attempts of it, we find naturally a resistance, from some powerful principle; so that every one may subscribe to the speech of the apostle, that *when we would do good, evil is present with us.* No reason of this can be rendered, but the natural temper of our souls, and an affecting a distance from God under any consideration: for though our guilt first made the breach, yet this aversion to a converse with him steps up without any actual reflections upon our guilt, which may render God terrible to us as an offended judge. Are we not often also in our attendance upon him, more pleased with the modes of worship which gratify our fancy, than to have our souls inwardly delighted with the object of worship, himself? This is a part of our natural atheism. To cast such duties off by total neglect, or in part, by affecting a coldness in them, is to cast off the *fear of the Lord. Job* 15. 4. *Not to call upon God*, and not *to know him*, are one and the same thing. *Jer.* 10. 25. Either we think there is no such being in the world, or that he is so slight a one, that he deserves not the respect he calls for; or so

impotent and poor, that he cannot supply what our necessities require.

3. No desire of a thorough *return* to him. The first man fled from him after his defection, though he had no refuge to fly to, but the grace of his Creator. Cain went from his presence, would be a fugitive from God, rather than a supplicant to him; when by faith in, and application of, the promised Redeemer, he might have escaped the wrath to come for his brother's blood, and mitigated the sorrows he was justly sentenced to bear in the world. Nothing will separate prodigal man from *feeding with swine*, and make him *return to his father*, but poverty and wretchedness. Have we but *husks* to feed on, we shall never think of a father's presence. It were well if our indigence would drive us to him; but when our *strength is devoured*, we will not *return to the Lord our God, nor seek him for all this. Hos.* 7. 10. Not his drawn sword as a God of judgment, nor his mighty power as a Lord, nor his open arms as the Lord their God, could move them to turn their eyes and their hearts towards him. The more he invites us to partake of his grace, the further we run from him to provoke his wrath; the louder God called them by his prophets, the closer they stuck to their *Baal. Hos.* 11. 2. We turn our backs when he stretches out his hand, stop our ears when he lifts up his voice; we fly from him when he courts us, and shelter ourselves in any bush from his merciful hand, that would lay hold upon us; nor will we set our faces towards him, till *our way be hedged up with thorns*, and not a gap left to creep out any by-way. *Hos.* 2. 6, 7. Whosoever is brought to a return, puts the Holy Ghost to the pain of striving; he is not easily brought to a spiritual subjection to God, nor persuaded to a surrender at a summons, but sweetly overpowered by storm, and victoriously drawn into the arms of God. God stands ready, but the heart stands off; grace is full of intreaties, and the soul full of excuses; divine love offers, and carnal self-love rejects; nothing so pleases us, as when we are furthest from him; as if any thing were more amiable, any thing more desirable than himself.

4. No desire of any close *imitation* of him. When our Saviour was to come *as a refiner's fire to purify the sons of Levi*, the cry is, *who shall abide the day of his coming? Mal.* 3. 2, 3. Since we are alienated from the life of God, we desire no more naturally to live the life of God, than a toad, or any other animal, desires to live the life of a man: no heart that knows God, but hath a holy ambition to imitate him: no soul that refuseth him for a copy, but is ignorant of his excellence. Of this temper is all mankind naturally. Man in corruption is as loath to be like God in holiness; as Adam after his creation was desirous to be like God in knowledge; his posterity are like their father, who soon turned his back upon his original copy. What can be worse than this? Can the denial of his being be a greater injury than this contempt of him; as if he had not goodness to deserve our remembrance, nor amiableness fit for our converse; as if he were not a Lord fit for our subjection, nor *had a holiness that deserved our imitation?*

PART V.

THE SUBJECT IMPROVED.

The wonderful patience of God—His justice—The necessity of regeneration—Difficulty of conversion—Of mortification—Reasons of unbelief—The author of conversion—Why justification is not by works—Cause of apostacy—Excellency of the gospel—Humbling sense of atheism—Atheism pours contempt upon God—As the most amiable object—Ingratitude of it—Misery of it—Watchfulness against it—The excellencies of God to be contemplated—Study of the scriptures—Sensual pleasure and sins against knowledge to be avoided—Conclusion.

WE now come to the use of this subject.

1. For our *information.* 1. It gives us occasion to admire *the wonderful patience and mercy of God.* How many millions of practical atheists breathe every day in his air, and live upon his bounty, who deserve to be inhabitants in hell, rather than possessors of the earth? An infinite holiness is offended, and an infinite justice is provoked; yet an infinite patience forbears the punishment, and an infinite goodness relieves our wants. The more we had merited his justice and forfeited his favour, the more is his affection enhanced, which makes his hand so liberal to us. At the first invasion of his rights, he mitigates the terror of the threatening, which was set to defend his law, with the grace of a promise to relieve and recover his rebellious creature, *Gen.* 3. 15. Who would have looked for any thing but tearing thunders, sweeping judgments, to raze up the foundations of the

apostate world? But, Oh, how great are his compassions to his aspiring competitors? Have we not proved his contrivances for our good, though we have refused him for our happiness? Has he not opened his arms, when we spurned with our feet; held out his alluring mercy, when we have brandished against him a rebellious sword? Has he not intreated us while we have invaded him, as if he were unwilling to lose us, who are ambitious to destroy ourselves? Has he yet denied us the care of his providence while we have denied him the rights of his honour, and would appropriate them to ourselves? Has the sun forborne shining upon us, though we have shot our arrows against him? Have not our beings been supported by his goodness, while we have endeavoured to climb up to his throne; and his mercies continued to charm us, while we have used them as weapons to injure him? Our own necessities might excite us to own him as our happiness, but he adds his invitations to the voice of our wants. Has he not promised a kingdom to those that would strip him of his crown, and proclaimed pardon upon repentance to those that would take away his glory? And hath so united together his own end, which is his honour, and man's true end, which is his salvation, that a man cannot truly mind himself and his own salvation, but he must mind God's glory; and cannot be intent upon God's honour, but by the same act he promotes himself and his own happiness; so loath is God to give any just occasion of dissatisfaction to his creature, as well as to dishonour himself. All those wonders of his mercy are enhanced by the heinousness of our atheism; a multitude of gracious thoughts from him above the multitude of contempts from us. *Psal.* 106. 7. What rebels in actual arms against their prince aiming at his life, ever found that favour from him, to have all their necessaries richly afforded them, without which they would starve, and without which they would be unable to manage their attempts, as we have received from God? Had not God had *riches of goodness, forbearance, and long suffering*, and infinite riches

too, the despite the world hath done him in refusing him as their rule, happiness, and end, would have emptied him long ago. *Rom.* 2. 4.

2. It brings in a justification of *the exercise of his justice.* If it gives us occasion loudly to praise his patience; it also stops our mouths from accusing any acts of his vengeance. What can be too sharp a recompence for the despising and disgracing so great a Being? The highest contempt merits the greatest anger; and when we will not own him for our happiness, it is just we should feel the misery of separation from him. If he that is guilty of treason deserves to lose his life; what punishment can be thought great enough for him that is so disingenuous as to prefer himself before a God so infinitely good, and so foolish as to invade the rights of one infinitely powerful? It is no injustice for a creature, to be for ever left to himself, to see what advantage he can make of that self he was so busily employed to set up in the place of his Creator. The soul of man deserves an infinite punishment for despising an infinite good; and it is not unequitable, that that self, which man makes his rule and happiness above God, should become his torment and misery by the righteousness of that God whom he despised.

3. Hence ariseth a necessity of *a new state and frame of soul,* to alter an atheistical nature. We forget God; think of him with reluctance; and have no respect to God in our course and acts. This cannot be our original state. God being infinitely good, could never let man come out of his hands with this actual unwillingness to acknowledge and serve him; he never intended to dethrone himself for the work of his hands, or that the creature should have any other end than that of his Creator: as the apostle saith in the case of the Galatians' error, *Gal.* 5. 8. *This persuasion came not of him that called you;* so this frame comes not from him that created you. How much therefore do we need a restoring principle in us? Instead of ordering ourselves according to the will of God, we are desirous to *fulfil the will of the flesh: Ephes.* 2. 3. There is a necessity of some other principle in us

to make us fulfil the will of God, since we were created for God, not for the flesh.

We can no more be voluntarily serviceable to God, while our serpentine nature and diabolical habits remain in us; than we can suppose the devil can be willing to glorify God, while the nature he contracted by his fall abides powerfully in him. Our nature and will must be changed, that our actions may regard God as our end, that we may delightfully meditate on him, and draw the motives of our obedience from him. Since this atheism is seated in nature, the change must be in our nature; since our first aspirings to the rights of God, were the fruits of the serpent's breath, which tainted our nature, there must be a removal of this taint, whereby our natures may be on the side of God against Satan, as they were before on the side of Satan against God. There must be a supernatural principle before we can live a supernatural life, i. e. live to God, since we are naturally alienated from the life of God. The aversion of our natures from God, is as strong as our inclinations to evil; we are disgusted with one, and pressed with the other; we have no will, no heart, to come to God in any service. This nature must be broken in pieces and new moulded, before we can make God our rule and our end: while men's *deeds are evil*, they cannot comply with God; *John* 3. 19, 20, much less while their *natures* are evil. Till this be done, all the service a man performs rises from some *evil imagination of the heart, which is evil, only evil, and that continually, Gen.* 6. 5, from wrong notions of God, wrong notions of duty, or corrupt motives. All the pretences of devotion to God, are but the adoration of some golden image. Prayers to God for the ends of self, are like those of the devil to our Saviour, when he asked leave to go into the herd of swine. The *object* was right, Christ; the *end* was the destruction of the swine, and the satisfaction of their malice to the owners. There is a necessity then that depraved ends should be removed, that that which was God's end in our framing, may be our end in our acting, viz. his glory which cannot be without a change of

nature. We can never honour him supremely whom we do not supremely love; till this be, we cannot glorify God as God, though we do things by his command; no more, than when God employed Satan in afflicting Job. His performance cannot be said to be good, because his end was not the same with God's; he acted out of malice, what God commanded out of sovereignty, and for gracious designs: had God employed an holy angel in his design upon Job, the action had been good in the affliction, because his nature was holy, and therefore his ends holy; but bad in Satan, because his ends were base and unworthy.

4. We may gather from hence the *difficulty of conversion*, and mortification to follow thereupon. What is the reason men receive no more impression from the voice of God and the light of his truth, than a dead man in the grave doth from the roaring thunder, or a blind mole from the light of the sun? It is because our atheism is as great as the deadness of the one, or the blindness of the other. The principle in the heart is strong to shut the door both of the thoughts and affections against God. If a friend oblige us we shall act for him as for ourselves; we are won by intreaties, soft words overcome us, but our hearts are as deaf as the hardest rock at the call of God. Neither the joys of heaven proposed by him can allure us, nor the flashed terrors of hell affright us to him; as if we conceived God unable to bestow the one, or execute the other; The true reason is, God and self contest for the deity. The law of sin is, God must be at the footstool; the law of God is, sin must be utterly deposed; now it is difficult to leave a law beloved, for a law long ago discarded. The mind of man will hunt after any thing; the will of man embrace any thing; upon the proposal of mean objects the spirit of man spreads its wings, flies to catch them, becomes one with them; but attempt to bring it under the power of God, the wings flag, the creature looks lifeless, as though there were no spring of motion in it. It is as much crucified to God, as the holy apostle was to the world; the sin of the heart discovers its strength, the more God discovers the *holiness of his will*, *Rom.* 7.

9, 10, 11, 12. The love of sin hath been predominant in our nature, has quashed a love to God, if not extinguished it.

Hence also is the difficulty of mortification. This is a work tending to the honour of God, the abasing of that inordinately aspiring humour in ourselves. If the nature of man be inclined to sin, as it is, it must needs be bent against any thing that opposes it. It is impossible to strike any true blow at any lust, till the true sense of God be re-entertained in the soil where it ought to grow. Who can be naturally willing to crucify what is incorporated with him, *his flesh?* what is dearest to him, himself? Is it an easy thing for man, the competitor with God, to turn his arms against himself; that self should overthrow its own empire; lay aside all its pretensions to, and designs for a God-head; to hew off its own members, and subdue its own affections? it is the nature of man to cover his sin, to hide it in his bosom;* not to destroy it; and as unwillingly part with his carnal affections, as the legion of devils were with the man that had been long possessed; and when he is forced from one he will endeavour to espouse some other lust, as those devils desired to possess swine, when they were chased from their possession of that man.

5. Here we see the *reason* of unbelief. That which hath most of God in it, meets with most aversion from us; that which hath least of God, finds better and stronger inclinations in us. What is the reason, that the heart of man is more unwilling to embrace the gospel, than acknowledge the equity of the law? Because there is more of God's nature and perfection evident in the gospel than in the law: besides there is more reliance on God, and distance from self, commanded in the gospel. The law puts a man upon his own strength, the gospel takes him off from his own strength; the law acknowledges him to have a power in himself, and to act for his own reward, the gospel strips him of all

* Job. 13. 33. If I cover my transgression, as Adam.

his proud and towering thoughts,* brings him to his due place, the foot of God; orders him to deny himself as his own rule, righteousness, and end; *and henceforth not to live to himself*, 2 *Cor.* 5. 15. This is the true reason why men are more against the gospel than against the law; because it doth more deify God, and debase man. Hence it is easier to reduce men to some moral virtue, than to faith; to make men blush at their outward vices, but not at the inward impurity of their natures. Hence it is observed, that those that asserted, that all happiness did arise from something in a man's self, as the Stoics and Epicureans did; and that a wise man was equal with God; were greater enemies to the truths of the gospel than others, *Acts* 17. 18, because it lays the axe to the root of their principal opinion. Takes the one from their self-sufficiency, and the other from their self-gratification: it opposeth the brutish principle of the one, which placed happiness in the pleasures of the body, and the more noble principle of the other, which placed happiness in the virtue of the mind: the one was for a sensual, the other for a moral self; both disowned by the doctrine of the gospel.

6. It informs us consequently, who can be *the author of grace and conversion*, and every other good work. No practical atheist ever yet turned to God, but was turned by God; and not to acknowledge it to God, is a part of this atheism, since it is a robbing God of the honour of one of his most glorious works. If this practical atheism be natural to man ever since the first taint of nature in paradise, what can be expected from it but a resisting the work of God, and setting up all the forces of nature against the operations of grace, till a day of power dawn and clear up upon the soul. *Psal.* 110. 3. Not all the angels in heaven, or men upon earth, can be imagined to be able to persuade a man to fall out with himself. Nothing can turn the tide of nature, but a power above nature. God took away the

* 2 Cor. 10. 5.

sanctifying spirit from man, as a penalty for the first sin: and who can regain it but by his will and pleasure? Who can restore it but he that removed it? since every man hath the same fundamental atheism in him by nature, and would be a rule to himself, and his own end; he is so far from dethroning himself, that all the strength of his corrupted nature is alarmed up to stand to their arms, upon any attempt God makes to regain the fort. The will is so strong against God, that it is like many wills twisted together, *Eph. 2. 3. will of the flesh*, we translate it the *desires of the flesh*, like many threads twisted in a cable, never to be snapped asunder by a human arm; a power and will above ours, can only untwist so many wills in a knot. Man cannot rise to an acknowledgment of God without God; hell may as well become heaven, the devil be changed into an angel of light. The devil cannot but desire happiness; he knows the misery into which he is fallen; he cannot be desirous of that punishment he knows is reserved for him. Why doth he not sanctify God and glorify his Creator, wherein there is abundantly more pleasure than in his malicious course? Why doth he not petition to recover his ancient standing? He will not; there are *chains of darkness* upon his faculties; he will not be otherwise than he is. His desire to be God of the world sways him against his own interest; and out of love to his malice, he will not sin at a less rate to make a diminution of his punishment. Man, if God utterly refuseth to work upon him, is no better; and to maintain his atheism, would venture a hell. How is it possible for a man to turn himself to that God, against whom he hath a quarrel in his nature. The most rooted and settled habit in him being to set himself in the place of God? An atheist by nature, can no more alter his own temper, and engrave in himself the divine nature, than a rock can carve itself into the statue of a man, or a serpent, that is an enemy to man, could or would raise itself to the nobility of the human nature. That soul that by nature would strip God of his rights, cannot without a divine power be made conformable to him,

and acknowledge sincerely and cordially the rights and glory of God.

7. We may here see *the reason* why there can be no justification by the best and strongest works of nature. Can that which hath atheism at the root, justify either the action or person? What strength can those works have, which have neither God's law for their rule, nor his glory for their end; that are not wrought by any spiritual strength from him, nor tend with any spiritual affection to him? Can these be a foundation for the most holy God to pronounce a creature righteous? They will justify his justice in condemning, but cannot sway his justice to an absolution. Every natural man in his works, picks and chooses; he owns the will of God no further than he can wring it to suit the law of his members; and minds not the honour of God, but as it justles not with his own glory and secular ends. Can he be righteous that prefers his own will and his own honour, before the will and honour of the Creator? However men's actions may be beneficial to others, what reason hath God to esteem them, wherein there is no respect to him but themselves; whereby they dethrone him in their thoughts, while they seem to own him in their religious works? Every day reproves us with something different from the rule: thousands of wanderings offer themselves to our eyes. Can justification be expected from that which in itself is matter of despair.

8. See here *the cause of all the apostacy in the world.* Practical atheists were never conquered in such. They are still *alienated from the life of God.* And will not live to God, as he lives to himself and his own honour, *Eph.* 4. 17, 18. They loathe his rule, and distaste his glory; are loath to step out of themselves to promote the ends of another; and find not the satisfaction in him as they do in themselves. They will be judges of what is good for them and righteous in itself, rather than admit of God to judge for them. When men draw back from truth to error, it is to such opinions which may serve more to foment and cherish their ambition,

covetousness, or some beloved lust that disputes with God for precedency, and is designed to be served before him. *John* 12. 42, 43. *They love the praise of men more than the praise of God.* A preferring man before God was the reason they would not confess Christ, and God in him.

9. This shews us the *excellency of the gospel* and christian religion. It sets man in his due place, and gives to God what the excellency of his nature requires. It lays man in the dust from whence he was taken, and sets God upon that throne where he ought to sit. Man by nature would annihilate God and deify himself; the gospel glorifies God and annihilates man. In our first revolt we would be like him in knowledge; in the means he hath provided for our recovery, he designs to make us like him in grace. The gospel shews ourselves to be an object of humiliation, and God to be a glorious object for our imitation. The light of nature tells us there is a God, the gospel gives us a more magnificent report of him; the light of nature condemns gross atheism, and that of the gospel condemns and conquers spiritual atheism in the hearts of men.

Use 2. Of exhortation.—And let us labour *to be sensible of this atheism* in our nature, *and be humbled for it.* How should we lie in the dust, and go bowing under the humbling thoughts of it all our days? Shall we not be sensible of that whereby we spill the blood of our souls, and give a stab to the heart of our own salvation? Shall we be worse than any creature, not to bewail that which tends to our destruction? He that doth not lament it, cannot challenge the character of a christian, hath nothing of the divine life and love planted in his soul. Not a man, but shall one day be sensible, when the eternal God shall call him out to examination, and charge his conscience to discover every crime, which will then own the authority whereby it acted; when the heart shall be torn open and the secrets of it brought to public view; and the world and man himself shall see what a viperous brood of corrupt principles and ends possessed his heart. Let us therefore be truly sensible of it, till the consideration draw tears from our eyes, and sorrow from our souls;

let us urge the thoughts of it upon our hearts, till the core of that pride be eaten out, and our stubbornness changed into humility; till our heads become waters, and our eyes fountains of tears, and be a spring of prayer to God to change the heart, and mortify the atheism in it; and consider what a sad thing it is to be a practical atheist: And who is not so by nature?

1. Let us be sensible of it *in ourselves.* Have any of our hearts been a soil wherein the fear and reverence of God hath naturally grown? Have we a desire to know him, or a will to embrace him? Do we delight in his will, and love the remembrance of his name? Are our respects to him as God, equal to the speculative knowledge we have of his nature? Is the heart, wherein he hath stamped his image, reserved for his residence? Is not the world more affected than the Creator of the world; as though that could contribute to us a greater happiness than the Author of it? Have not creatures as much of our love, fear, and trust, nay more, than God that framed both them and us? Have we not too often relied upon our own strength, and made an idol of our own wisdom, and said of God, as the Israelites of Moses, as for this Moses *we know not what is become of him. Exod.* 32. 1. And have we not oftener given the glory of our good success to our drag and our net, to our craft and our industry, than to the wisdom and blessing of God? Are we then free from this sort of atheism? * It is as impossible to have two Gods at one time in one heart, as to have two kings at one time in full power in one kingdom. Have there not been frequent neglects of God? Have we not been deaf whilst he hath knocked at our doors; slept when he hath sounded in our ears, as if there had been no such being as a God in the world; how many strugglings have been against our approaches to him? Hath not folly often been committed with vain imaginations, starting up in the time of religious service, which we would scarce vouchsafe a look to at another time, and in another business, but would have thrust them away

* Lawson, Body of Divinity, pa. 153. 154.

with indignation? Had they stept in to interrupt our worldly affairs, they would have been troublesome intruders, but while we are with God they are acceptable guests. How unwilling have our hearts been to fortify themselves with strong and influencing considerations of God, before we addressed ourselves to him? Is it not too often that our lifelessness in prayer proceeds from this atheism; a neglect of seeing what arguments and pleas may be drawn from the divine perfections, to second our suit in hand, and quicken our hearts in the service? Whence are those indispositions to any spiritual duty, but because we have not due thoughts of the majesty, holiness, goodness, and excellency of God? Is there any duty which leads to a more particular inquiry after him, or a more clear vision of him; but our hearts have been ready to rise up and call it cursed rather than blessed? Are not our minds beclouded with an ignorance of him, our wills drawn by aversion from him, our affections rising in distaste of him? More willing to know any thing than his nature, and more industrious to do any thing than his will? Do we not all fall under some one or other of these considerations? Is it not fit then that we should have a sense of them? It is to be bewailed by us, that so little of God is in our hearts, when so many evidences of the love of God are in the creatures; that God should be so little our end, who hath been so much our benefactor; that he should be so little in our thoughts, who is to be seen in every thing which presents itself to our eyes.

2. Let us be sensible of it *in others.* We ought to have a just execration of the too open iniquity in the midst of us; and imitate holy David, whose tears plentifully gushed out, *because men kept not God's law. Psal.* 119. 136. And is it not a time to exercise this pious lamentation? Hath the wicked atheism of any age been greater, or can you find worse in hell, than we may hear of, and behold on earth? How is the excellent majesty of God, adored by the angels in heaven, despised and reproached by men on earth; as if his name were published to be matter of their sport? What a

gasping thing is a natural sense of God among men in the world? Is not the law of God, accompanied with such dreadful threatenings and curses, made light of; as if men would place their honour in being above or beyond any sense of that glorious majesty? How many wallow in pleasures, as if they had been made men only to turn brutes, and their souls given them only for salt to keep their bodies from putrifying? It is as well a part of atheism not to be sensible of the abuses of God's name and laws by others, as to violate them ourselves. What is the language of a stupid insensibility of them, but that there is no God in the world, whose glory is worth vindication and deserves our regards?

That we may be sensible of the unworthiness of neglecting God as our rule and end; consider, 1. The *unreasonableness* of it as it concerns God.

It is a high *contempt of God.* It is an inverting the order of things; a making God the highest, to become the lowest, and self the lowest, to become the highest. To be guided by every base companion, some idle vanity, some carnal interest, is to acknowledge an excellency abounding in them which is wanting in God; an equity in their orders and none in God's precepts; a goodness in their promises and a falsity in God's. As if infinite excellence were a mere vanity, that to act for God were the debasement of our reason, and that to act for *self*, or some pitiful creature or sordid lust, were the glory and advancement of it. To prefer any one sin before the honour of God, is as if that sin had been our creator and benefactor, as if it were the original cause of our being and support. Do not men pay as great a homage to that as they do to God? Do not their minds eagerly pursue it? Are not the revolvings of it in their fancies as delightful to them, as the remembrance of God to a holy soul? Do any obey the commands of God with more readiness, than they do the orders of their base affections? Did Peter leap more readily into the sea to meet his master, than many into the jaws of hell to meet their Delilahs? How cheerfully did the Israelites part with their orna-

ments for the sake of an idol, who would not have spared a moiety for the honour of their deliverer? *Exod.* 32. 3. If to make God our end is the principal duty in nature, then to make ourselves or any thing else our end, is the greatest vice in the rank of evils.

It is a *contempt of God as the most amiable object.* God is infinitely excellent and desirable, *Zach.* 9. 17, *How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty?* There is nothing in him but what may charm our affections; none that knows him but finds attractives to keep them with him. He hath nothing in him which can be a proper object of contempt, no defects or shadow of evil; there is infinite excellence to charm us, and infinite goodness to allure us, in the author of our being, the benefactor of our lives. Why then should man, which is his image, be so base as to slight the beautiful original which is stamped on him? He is the most lovely object, therefore to be studied, therefore to be honoured, therefore to be followed; in his perfections he hath the highest right to our thoughts. All other beings were eminently contained in his essence, and were produced by his infinite power. The creature hath nothing but what it hath from God; and is not it unworthy to prefer the copy before the original, to fall in love with a picture instead of the beauty it represents? The creature, which we advance to be our rule and end, can no more report to us the true amiableness of God, than a few colours mixed and suited together upon a piece of cloth, can the moral and intellectual loveliness of the soul of man. To contemn God one moment is more base than if all creatures were contemned by us for ever; because the excellency of creatures is to God like that of a drop to the sea, or a spark to the glory of inconceivable millions of suns. As much as the excellency of God is above our conceptions, so much does the debasing of him admit of inexpressible aggravations.

2. Consider the *ingratitude* in it. That we should resist that God with our hearts, who made us the work of his hands, and count him as nothing, from whom we derive all the good that we are or have. There is no con-

tempt of man but steps in here to aggravate our slighting of God, because there is no relation one man can stand in to another wherein God doth not more highly appear to man. If we abhor the unworthy carriage of a child to a tender father, a servant to an indulgent master, a man to his obliging friend, why do men daily act that towards God, which they cannot speak of without abhorrence if acted by another against man? Is God a being less to be regarded than man, and more worthy of contempt than a creature? * "It would be strange if a benefactor should live in the same town, in the same house with us, and we never exchange a word with him; yet this is our case, who have the works of God in our eyes, the goodness of God in our being, the mercy of God in our daily food," yet think so little of him, converse so little with him, serve every thing before him, and prefer every thing above him? Whence have we our mercies but from his hand? Who, besides him, maintains our breath this moment? Would he call for our spirits this moment, they must depart from us to attend his command. There is not a moment wherein our unworthy carriage is not aggravated, because there is not a moment wherein he is not our guardian, and gives us not tastes of a fresh bounty. And it is no light aggravation of our crime, that we injure him, without whose bounty in giving us our being, we had not been capable of casting contempt upon him. That he that hath the greatest stamp of his image, man, should deserve the character of the worst of his rebels; that he, who hath only reason by the gift of God to judge of the equity of the laws of God, should swell against them as grievous, and the government of the law-giver as burdensome. Can it lessen the crime to use the principle wherein we excel the beasts, to the disadvantage of God, who endowed us with that principle above the beasts?

1. It is a debasing of God beyond what *the devil does at present*. He is more excusable in his present state of acting, than man is in his present refusing God for his rule and end. He strives against a God that exerciseth

* Reynolds.

upon him a vindictive justice: we debase a God that loads us with his daily mercies. The despairing devils are excluded from any mercy or divine patience: but we are not only under the long-suffering of his patience, but the large expressions of his bounty. He would not be governed by him when he was only his bountiful Creator. We refuse to be guided by him after he hath given us the blessing of creation from his own hand, and the more obliging blessings of redemption by the hand and blood of his Son. It cannot be imagined that the devils and the damned should ever make God their end, since he hath assured them he will not be their happiness; and shut up all his perfections from their experimental notice, but those of his power to preserve them, and his justice to punish them. They have no grant from God of ever having a heart to comply with his will, or ever having the honour to be actively employed for his glory. They have some plea for their present contempt of God; not in regard of his nature, for he is infinitely amiable, excellent, and lovely; but in regard of his administration towards them; but what plea can man have for his practical atheism, who lives by his power, is sustained by his bounty, and solicited by his spirit? What an ungrateful thing is it to put off the nature of man for that of devils; and dishonour God under mercy, as the devils do under his wrathful anger?

2. It is an ungrateful contempt of God, *who cannot be injurious to us.* He cannot do us wrong, because he cannot be unjust, *Gen.* 18. 25, *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* His nature as much abhors unrighteousness, as he loves a communicative goodness; he never commanded any thing, but what was highly conducible to the happiness of man. Infinite goodness can no more injure man, than it can dishonour itself. It lays out itself in additions of kindness, and while we debase him, he continues to benefit us. And is it not unparalleled ingratitude to turn our backs upon an object so lovely, an object so loving, in the midst of varieties of allurements from him? God did create intellectual creatures, angels and men, that he might communicate

more of himself, and his own goodness and holiness to man, than creatures of a lower rank were capable of. What do we do by rejecting him as our rule and end, but cross, as much as in us lies, God's end in our creation, and shut our souls against the communications of those perfections he was so willing to bestow? We use him as if he intended us the greatest wrong, when it is impossible for him to do so, in the least degree, to any of his creatures.

3. Consider the *misery which will attend such a temper* if it continue predominant. Those that cast God away as their happiness and end, can expect no other, but to be cast away by him as to any relief and compassion. A distance from God here can look for nothing, but a remoteness from God hereafter. When the devil, a creature of vast endowments, would advance himself above God, and instruct man to commit the same sin, he is *cursed above all creatures. Gen.* 3. 14. When we will not acknowledge him a God of all glory, we shall be separated from him as a God of all comfort: *All they that are afar off shall perish, Psa.* 73. 27. This is the spring of all woe. What the prodigal suffered, was because he would leave his father and live of himself. Whosoever is ambitious to be his own heaven; will at last find his soul to become his own hell. As it loved all things for itself, so it shall be grieved with all things for itself. As it would be its own God against the right of God, it shall then be its own tormentor by the justice of God.

Let us *watch against this atheism*, and be daily employed *in the mortification of it*. In every action we should make the inquiry, what is the rule I observe? Is it God's will, or my own? Whether do my intentions tend to set up God, or *self?* As much as we destroy this, we abate the power of sin: these two things are the head of the serpent in us, which we must be bruising by the power of the cross. Sin is nothing else but a turning from God and centering in self, and most in the inferior part of self: if we bend our force against those two, self-will and self-ends, we shall intercept atheism at the spring head, and take away that which constitutes and animates

all sin. The sparks must vanish, if the fire be quenched which affords them fuel. They are but two short things to ask in every undertaking:—Is God my rule in regard of his will? Is God my end in regard of his glory? All sin lies in the neglect of these, all grace lies in the practice of them. Without some degree of the mortification of these, we cannot make profitable and comfortable approaches to God. When we come with idols in our hearts, we shall be answered according to the multitude and the baseness of them too. *Ezek.* 14. 4. What expectation of a good look from him can we have, when we come before him with undeifying thoughts of him; a petition in our mouths and a sword in our hearts to stab his honour?

To this purpose, (1.) Be often in *contemplating the excellencies of* God. When we have no intercourse with God by delightful meditations, we begin to be estranged from him, and prepare ourselves to live without God in the world. Strangeness is the mother and nurse of disaffection. We slight men sometimes because we know them not. The very beasts delight in the company of men, when being tamed and familiar, they become acquainted with their disposition. A daily converse with God would discover so much of loveliness in his nature, so much of sweetness in his ways, that our injurious thoughts of God would wear off, and we should count it our honour to contemn ourselves and magnify him. By this means a slavish fear, which is both a dishonour to God and a torment to the soul, and the root of atheism, will be cast out, and an ingenuous fear of him wrought in the heart. 1 *John* 4. 18. Exercised thoughts on him would issue out in affections to him, which would engage our hearts to make him both our rule and our end. This course would stifle any temptations to gross atheism, wherewith believing souls are sometimes haunted, by confirming us more in the belief of a God; and discourage any attempts to a deliberate practical atheism: we are not likely to espouse any principle which is confuted by the delightful converse we daily have with him. The more we thus enter into the

presence chamber of God, the more we cling about him with our affections; the more vigorous and lively will the true notion of God grow up in us, and be able to prevent any thing which may dishonour him and debase our souls.

Let us therefore consider him as the only happiness, set up the true God in our understandings, and possess our hearts with a deep sense of his desirable excellency above all other things. This is the main thing we are to do in order to our great business: all the directions in the world with the neglect of this, will be insignificant cyphers. The neglect of this is common, and is the basis of all the mischiefs which happen to the souls of men. (2.) To this purpose, *prize and study the scripture.* We can have no delight in meditation on him, unless we know him; and we cannot know him but by the means of his own revelation. When the revelation is despised, the revealer will be of little esteem. Men do not throw off God from being their rule, till they throw off Scripture from being their guide, and God must needs be cast off from being an end, when the scripture is rejected from being a rule. Those that do not care to know his will, that love to be ignorant of his nature, can never be affected to his honour. Let therefore the subtilities of reason yield to the doctrine of faith, and the honour of the will to the command of the word. (3.) Take heed of *sensual pleasures*, and be very watchful and cautious in the use of those comforts God allows us. Job was afraid when his sons *feasted, that they should curse God in their hearts*, *Job* 1. 4. It was not without cause that the apostle Peter joined sobriety with watchfulness and prayer, 1 *Pet.* 4. 7. *The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.* Prayer is the great acknowledgment of God, and too much sensuality is a hindrance of this, and a step to atheism. Belshazzar's *lifting himself up against the Lord*, and not glorifying of God, is charged upon his sensuality, *Dan.* 5. 23. Nothing is more apt to quench the notions of God, and root out the consciousness of him, than an addictedness to sensual pleasures: therefore take heed of that snare. (4.)

Take heed of *sins against knowledge.* The more sins against knowledge are committed, the more careless we are, and the more careless we shall be, of God and his honour. We shall more fear his judicial power, and the more we fear that, the more we shall disaffect that God in whose hand vengeance is, and to whom it doth belong. Atheism in conversation proceeds to atheism in affection, and that will endeavour to sink into atheism in opinion and judgment.

The sum of the whole: we see, 1. That man would set himself up as his own rule. He disowns the rule of God, is unwilling to have any acquaintance with the rule God sets him, is negligent in using the means for the knowledge of his will, and endeavours to shake it off when any notices of it break in upon him. When he cannot expel it, he hath no pleasure in the consideration of it, and the heart swells against it. When the notions of the will of God are entertained, it is on some other consideration, or with wavering and unsettled affections. Many times men design to improve some lust by his truth. This unwillingness respects truth as it is most spiritual and holy; as it most relates and leads to God; as it is most contrary to self. He is guilty of contempt of the will of God, which is seen in every presumptuous breach of his law. In the natural aversions to the declaration of his will and mind which way soever he turns. In slighting that part of his will which is most for his honour. In the awkwardness of the heart, when it is to pay God a service. A constraint in the first engagement; slightness in the service in regard of the matter; in regard of the frame, without a natural vigour. Many distractions, much weariness; in deserting the rule of God, when our expectations are not answered upon our service; in breaking promises with God.

Man naturally owns *any other rule,* rather than that of God's prescribing. The rule of Satan, the will of man. In complying more with the dictates of men than the will of God. In observing that which is materially so, not because it is his will, but the injunctions of men. In obeying the will of man, when it is con-

trary to the will of God. This man doth in order to the setting up himself. This is natural to man, as he is corrupted. Men are dissatisfied with their own consciences when they contradict the desires of self. Most actions in the world are done, more because they are agreeable to self, than as they are honourable to God; as they are agreeable to natural and moral self, or sinful self. It is evident in neglects of taking God's directions upon emergent occasions. In counting the actions of others to be good or bad, as they suit with or spurn against our fancies and humours. Man would make himself the rule of God, and give laws to his Creator. In striving against his law. Disapproving of his method of government in the world; in impatience in our particular concerns; envying the gifts and prosperity of others. Corrupt matter or ends of prayer or praise. Bold interpretations of the judgments of God in the world. Mixing rules in the worship of God with those which have been ordained by him. Suiting interpretations of scripture with our own minds and humours; and falling off from God after some fair compliances, when his will grates upon us and crosses ours.

2. Man would be *his own end.* This is natural and universal. This is seen in frequent self applauses, and inward overweening reflections. In ascribing the glory of what we do or have to ourselves. In desire of self-pleasing doctrines. In being highly concerned in injuries done to ourselves, and little or not at all concerned for injuries done to God. In trusting in ourselves. In working for carnal self against the light of our own consciences, this is a usurping God's prerogative, vilifying God, destroying God. Man would make any thing his end or happiness rather than God. This appears in the fewer thoughts we have of him than of any thing else. In the greedy pursuit of the world. In the strong addictedness to sensual pleasures. In paying a service upon any success in the world to instruments more than to God. This is a debasing God in setting up a creature; but more in setting up a base lust; it is a denying of God. Man would make himself the end

of all creatures. In pride; using the creatures contrary to the end God hath appointed. This is to dishonour God; and it is diabolical. Man would make himself the end of God. In loving God, because of some self pleasing benefits distributed by him. In abstinence from some sins, because they are against the interest of some other beloved corruption. In performing duties merely for a selfish interest which is evident in unweildiness in religious duties where self is not concerned. In calling upon God only in times of necessity. In begging his assistance to our own projects, after we have by our own craft laid the plot. In impatience upon a refusal of our desires. In selfish aims we have in our duties. This is a vilifying God, a dethroning him. In unworthy imaginations of God, universal in man by nature. Hence springs idolatry, superstition, presumption, the common disease of the world. This is vilifying God; worse than idolatry, worse than absolute atheism. Natural desires to be distant from him. No desires for the remembrance of him. No desires of converse with him. No desires of a thorough return to him. No desire of any close imitation of him.

GOD A SPIRIT.

John iv. 24.

GOD IS A SPIRIT, AND THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM, MUST WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.

PART I.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD.

The connexion of the Text—The Woman of Samaria—Foundation and Rule of Worship—Division of the Subject—In what Senses God is called a Spirit—Understood by way of Negation—Imagination of some Heathens—Arguments to prove his Spirituality—An Objection answered—How Onkelos treated the Notion of Corporiety in God.

THE words are part of the dialogue between our Saviour, and the Samaritan woman. Christ intending to return from Judea to Galilee, passed through the country of Samaria, a place inhabited not by Jews, but a mixed company of several nations, and some remainders of the posterity of Israel, who escaped the captivity and were returned from Assyria; and being weary with his journey, arrived about the sixth hour or noon (according to the Jews reckoning the time of the day) at a well that Jacob had digged, which was of great account among the inhabitants for the antiquity of it as well as the usefulness of it, in supplying their necessities: he being thirsty, and having none to furnish him wherewith to draw water, at

last comes a woman from the city, whom he desires to give him some water to drink. The woman perceiving him by his language or habit to be a Jew, wonders at the question, since the hatred the Jews bore the Samaritans was so great, that they would not vouchsafe to have any commerce with them, not only in religious, but civil affairs, and common offices belonging to mankind. Hence our Saviour takes occasion to publish to her the doctrine of the gospel; and excuseth her rude answer by her ignorance of him; and tells her that if she had asked him a greater matter, even that which concerned her eternal salvation, he would readily have granted it, notwithstanding the rooted hatred between the Jews and Samaritans, and bestowed a water of a greater virtue, the *water of life*. The woman is no less astonished at his reply, than she was at his first demand. It was strange to hear a man speak of giving living water, to one of whom he had begged the water of that spring, and had no vessel to draw any to quench his own thirst. She therefore demands whence he could have this water that he speaks of, since she conceived him not greater than Jacob, who had digged that well and drunk of it. Our Saviour, desirous to make a progress in that work he had begun, extols the water he spake of above this of the well, from its particular virtue, fully to refresh those that drank of it, and be as a cooling and comforting fountain within them of more efficacy than that without. The woman conceiving a good opinion of our Saviour, desires to partake of this water to save her pains in coming daily to the well, not apprehending the spirituality of Christ's discourse to her. Christ finding her to take some pleasure in his discourse, partly to bring her to a sense of her sin, before he communicated the excellence of his grace, bids her return back to the city and bring her husband to him: she freely acknowledges that she had no husband, whether having some check of conscience at present for the unclean life she led, or loath to lose so much time in the gaining this water so much desired by her: our Saviour takes occasion from this to lay open her sin before her, and to make her sensible of her own wicked life, and the pro-

phetic excellence of his character; and tells her, she had *five husbands* to whom she had been false, and by whom she was divorced, and the person she now dwelt with was not her lawful husband, and in living with him she violated the rights of marriage, and increased guilt upon her conscience. The woman being affected with this discourse, and knowing him to be a stranger, that could not be certified of those things but in an extraordinary way, begins to have a high esteem of him as a prophet. And upon this opinion she esteems him able to decide a question which had been canvassed between them and the Jews about the place of worship. Their *fathers worshipping in that mountain*, and the Jews affirming Jerusalem to be a place of worship: she pleads the antiquity of the worship in this place: Abraham having built an altar there, *Gen.* 12. 7, and Jacob upon his return from Syria. And surely had the place been capable of an exception, such persons as they, and so well acquainted with the will of God, would not have pitched upon that place to celebrate their worship. Antiquity hath too often bewitched the minds of men, and drawn them from the revealed will of God. Men are more willing to imitate the outward actions of their famous ancestors, than conform themselves to the revealed will of their Creator. The Samaritans would imitate the Patriarchs in the place of worship, but not in the faith of the worshippers.

Christ answers her, that this question would quickly be resolved by a new state of the church which was near at hand, and neither Jerusalem which had not the precedency, nor that mountain should be of any more value in that concern than any other place in the world. But yet, to make her sensible of her sin, and that of her countrymen, our Lord tells her, that their worship in that mountain was not according to the will of God, he having long after the altars built in this place fixed Jerusalem as the place of sacrifices; besides, they had not the knowledge of that God which ought to be worshipped by them, but the Jews had the *true object of worship* and the *true manner of worship, according to the declaration God had made of himself to them.* But all that ser-

vice shall vanish, the vail of the temple shall be rent in twain, and that carnal worship give place to one more spiritual; shadows shall fly before substance, and truth advance itself above figures, and the worship of God shall be with the strength of the spirit; such a worship, and such worshippers doth the *Father seek:* For *God is a Spirit, and those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* The design of our Saviour is to declare, that God is not taken with external worship invented by men, no, nor commanded by himself; and that upon this reason, because he is a spiritual essence, infinitely above gross and corporeal matter, and is not taken with that pomp which is a pleasure to our earthly imaginations.

Πνεῦμα ὁ Θεὸς. Some translate it just as the words lie. *Spirit is God:* * But it is not unusual both in the old and new Testament languages, to put the predicate before the subject, as *Psal.* 5. 9, *Their throat is an open sepulchre;* in the Hebrew *a sepulchre open their throat.* So *Psa.* 111. 3, *His work is honourable and glorious.* Hebr. *Honour and glory his work.* And there wants not one example in the same Evangelist, *John* 1. 1, *And the word was God;* Greek, *and God was the word:* in all, the predicate, or what is ascribed, is put before the subject to which it is ascribed. One Tetlsus, and he an head of a party, that hath made a disturbance in the church of God, † that this place is not aptly brought to prove God to be a spirit: and the reasoning of Christ runs not thus, God is of a spiritual essence, and therefore must be worshipped with a spiritual worship; for the essence of God is not the foundation of his worship, but his will; for then we were not to worship him with a corporeal worship, because he is not a body; but an invisible and eternal worship, because he is invisible and eternal."—But the *nature* of God is the *foundation* of worship, the *will* of God is the *rule* of worship; the matter and manner is to be performed according to the will of God. But

* Vulgar lat. Illyrc. Clav. † Episcop. Institut. lib. 4. cap. 3.

is the nature of the object of worship to be excluded? No, as the object is, so ought our devotion to be, spiritual as he is spiritual. God in his commands for worship respected the discovery of his own nature; in the law he respected the discovery of his mercy and justice, and therefore commanded a worship by sacrifices; a spiritual worship without those institutions would not have declared those attributes, which it was God's end to display to the world in Christ; and though the nature of God is to be respected in worship, yet the obligations of the creature are to be considered. God is a spirit, therefore must have a spiritual worship. The creature hath a body as well as a soul, and both from God; and therefore ought to worship God with the one as well as the other, since one as well as the other is freely bestowed upon him. The spirituality of God was the foundation of the change from the judaical carnal worship to a more spiritual and evangelical.

God is a Spirit. That is, he hath nothing corporeal, no mixture of matter, not a visible substance, a bodily form. * *He is a spirit*, not a bare spiritual substance, but an understanding, willing spirit, holy, wise, good, and just Before Christ spake of the Father, the first person in the Trinity; now he speaks of God essentially: the word *Father* is personal, the word *God* essential. So that our Saviour would render a reason, not from any one person in the blessed Trinity, but from the divine nature, why we should worship in spirit, and therefore makes use of the word God, the being a spirit being common to the other persons with the Father. This is the reason of the proposition, verse 23, *of a spiritual worship.* Every nature delights in that which is like it, and distastes that which is most different from it. If God were corporeal, he might be pleased with the victims of beasts, and the beautiful magnificence of temples, and the noise of music; but being a spirit, he cannot be gratified with carnal things: he demands something better and greater than all those, that soul which he made, that

* Melancton.

soul which he hath endowed, a spirit of a frame suitable to his nature. He indeed appointed sacrifices and a temple, as shadows of those things which were to be most acceptable to him in the Messiah, but they were imposed only *till the time of reformation, Heb.* 9. 10.

Must worship him. Not they may, or it would be more agreeable to God to have such a manner of worship; but they *must*. It is not exclusive of bodily worship, for this were to exclude all public worship in societies, which cannot be performed without reverential postures of the body. * The gestures of the body are helps to worship and declarations of spiritual acts. We can scarcely worship God with our spirits without some influence upon the outward man. But he excludes all acts merely corporeal, all resting upon an external service and devotion, which was the crime of the Pharisees, and the general persuasion of the Jews as well as heathens, who used the outward ceremonies, not as signs of better things, but as if they did of themselves please God, and render the worshippers accepted with him, without any suitable frame of the inward man. † It is as if he had said, now you must separate yourselves from all carnal modes to which the service of God is now confined, and render a worship chiefly consisting in the affectionate motions of the heart, and accommodated more exactly to the condition of the object, who is a spirit.

In spirit and truth. ‡ The evangelical service now required has the advantage of the former; that was a shadow and figure, this the body and truth. § Spirit, say some, is here opposed to the legal ceremonies; truth to hypocritical services, ‖ or rather truth is opposed to shadows, and an opinion of worth in the outward action; it is principally opposed to external rites, because our Saviour says, ver. 23, *The hour comes, and now is,* &c. Had it been opposed to hypocrisy, Christ had said no new thing; for God always required truth in the inward parts, and all true worshippers had served him with a sincere

* Terniti. † Amirald in loc. ‡ Amirald in loc.
§ Muscul. ‖ Chemait.

conscience and single heart. The old patriarchs did worship God in spirit and truth, as taken for sincerity. Such a worship was always, and is perpetually due to God; because he always was, and eternally will be a spirit. * And it is said, *the Father seeks such to worship him;* not shall seek. He always sought it; it always was performed to him by one or other in the world, and the prophets had always rebuked them, for resting upon their outward solemnities, *Isa.* 58. 7, and *Micah* 6. 8. But a worship without legal rites was proper to an evangelical state and the times of the gospel, God having then exhibited Christ, and brought into the world the substance of those shadows, and the end of those institutions; there was no more need to continue them, when the true reason of them was ceased. All laws do naturally expire when the true reason upon which they were first framed, is changed.

Or by *spirit* may be meant, such a worship as is kindled in the heart by the breath of the Holy Ghost. Since we are dead in sin, a spiritual light and flame in the heart suitable to the nature of the object of our worship, cannot be raised in us without the operation of a supernatural grace; and though the fathers could not worship God without the spirit; yet in the gospel-times, there being a fuller effusion of the spirit, the evangelical state is called *the administration of the spirit*, and, 2 *Cor.* 3. 8, the *newness of the spirit*, in opposition to the legal economy, entitled *the oldness of the letter*, *Rom.* 7. 6. The evangelical state is more suited to the nature of God than any other. Such a worship God must have, whereby he is acknowledged to be the true sanctifier and quickener of the soul. The nearer God doth approach to us, and the more full his manifestations are, the more spiritual is the worship we return to God. The gospel pares off the rugged parts of the law, and heaven shall remove what is material in the gospel, and change the ordinances of worship into that of a spiritual praise.

In the words there is, 1. A proposition, *God is a*

* Muscal.

spirit. 2. An inference, *they that worship him*, &c. As God, worship belongs to him; as *a spirit*, spiritual worship is due to him. In the inference we have, 1. The manner of worship, *in spirit and in truth.* 2. The necessity of such a worship, *must.* The proposition declares the nature of God; the inference, the duty of man.

Ob. 1. That God is a pure spiritual being; he *is a spirit.* 2. That the worship due from the creature to God, must be *agreeable to the nature of God*, and purely spiritual. 3. That the *evangelical state* is suited to the nature of God.

First, God is *a pure spiritual Being.* It is the observation of one,* that the plain assertion of God's being a spirit is found but once in the whole Bible, and that is in this place, which may well be wondered at; because God is so often described with hands, feet, eyes, and ears, in the form and figure of a man. The spiritual nature of God is deducible from many places; but not any where, as I remember, asserted *totidem verbis*, but in this text. Some alledge that place, 2 *Cor.* 3. 17, *the Lord is that spirit*, for the proof of it; but that seems to have a different sense. In the text the nature of God is described, in that place, the operations of God in the gospel. † "It is not the ministry of Moses, or that old covenant, which communicates to you that spirit it speaks of; but it is the Lord Jesus, and the doctrine of the gospel, delivered by him whereby this spirit and liberty is dispensed to you; he opposes here the *liberty* of the gospel to the *servitude* of the law." It is from Christ that a divine virtue diffuses itself by the gospel; it is by him, not by the law, that we partake of that spirit. ‡ The spirituality of God, is as evident as his being. If we grant that God is, we must necessarily grant that he cannot be corporeal; because a body is of an imperfect nature. It will appear incredible to any that acknowledge God the first Being and Creator of all things, that he should be a massy heavy body, and have eyes and ears, feet and hands, as we have.

* Episop. institut. l. 4. c. 3. † Amirald in loc.
‡ Suarez de Deo, vol. 1. p. 9. col. 2.

For the explication of this it must be remarked, that, spirit is taken *various ways* in scripture. It signifies sometimes an ærial substance, as *Psal.* 11. 6, *A horrible tempest;* Heb. A *spirit* of tempest: sometimes the breath, which is a thin substance, *Gen.* 6. 17, *All flesh wherein is the breath of life;* Heb. *spirit* of life. A thin substance, though it be material and corporeal, is called *spirit:* and in the bodies of living creatures, that which is the principle of their actions is called spirits; the animal and vital spirits. And the finer parts extracted from plants and minerals, we call spirits; those volatile parts separated from that gross matter wherein they were immersed, because they come nearest to the nature of an incorporeal substance: and from this notion of the word, it is translated to signify those substances that are purely immaterial, as angels, and the souls of men. Angels are called spirits, *Psal.* 104. 4, *who makes his angels spirits;* and not only good angels are so called, but evil angels, *Mark* 1. 27. The souls of men are called spirits, *Eccl.* 12; and the soul of Christ is called so, *John* 19. 30. Whence God is called *the God of the spirits of all flesh*, *Numb.* 22. 16. and spirit is opposed to flesh, *Isa.* 31. 3, *The Egyptians are flesh and not spirit.* And our Saviour gives us the notion of a spirit to be something above the nature of a body, *Luke* 24. 39. *Not having flesh and bones*, extended parts, loads of gross matter. It is also taken for those things which are active and efficacious; because activity is of the nature of a spirit. Caleb had *another spirit*, *Numb.* 14. 24. an active affection. The vehement motions of sin are called spirit, *Hos.* 4. 12, *The spirit of whoredoms*; in that sense that *Prov.* 29. 11. *A fool utters all his mind*, all his spirit, he knows not how to restrain the vehement motions of his mind. So that the notion of a spirit is, that it is a fine immaterial substance, an active being, that actuates itself and other things. A mere body cannot actuate itself; as the body of man cannot move without the soul, no more than a ship can move itself without wind and waves. So God is called a spirit, as being not a body, not having the

greatness, figure, thickness, or length of a body, wholly separate from any thing of flesh and matter. We find a principle within us nobler than that of our bodies; and therefore we conceive the nature of God, according to that which is more worthy in us, and not according to that which is the vilest part of our natures. God is a most spiritual spirit, more spiritual than all angels, all souls.* As he exceeds all in the nature of being, so he exceeds all in the nature of spirit; he hath nothing gross, heavy, material in his essence.

When we say God is a spirit, it is to be understood by way of *negation.* There are two ways of knowing or describing God: by way of *affirmation,* affirming that of him in a way of eminency, which is excellent in the creature; as when we say God is wise, good; the other, by way of *negation,* when we remove from God in our conceptions, what is tainted with imperfection in the creature. † The first ascribes to him whatsoever is excellent; the other separates from him whatsoever is imperfect. The first is like painting, which adds one colour to another to make a comely picture; the other is like a carving, which pares and cuts away whatsoever is superfluous, to make a complete statue. This way of negation is more easy; we better understand what God *is not,* than what *he is*; and most of our knowledge of God, is by this way: as when we say God is infinite, immense, immutable, they are negatives: he hath no limits, is confined to no place, admits of no change. ‡ When we remove from him what is inconsistent with his being, we do more strongly assert his being, and know more of him when we elevate him above all, and above our own capacity. And when we say God is a spirit, it is a negation; he is not a body; he consists not of various parts, extended one without and beyond another: He is not a spirit so as our souls are, to be the form of any body: a spirit, not as angels and souls are, but infinitely higher; we call him so, because in

* Gerhard. μονοτροπωσ

† Gamacheus Tom. 1. q. 3. Cap. 1. p. 42.

‡ Coccei. sum. Theol. cap. 8.

regard of our weakness, we have not any other term of excellency to express or conceive of him by: We transfer it to God in honour, because spirit is the highest excellency in our nature: yet we must apprehend God above any spirit, since his nature is so great, that he cannot be declared by human speech, perceived by human sense, or conceived by human understanding.

The second thing, that *God is a spirit.* *Some among the heathen simagined God to have a body; some thought him to have a body of air, some a heavenly body, some a human body; † and many of them ascribed bodies to their gods; but bodies without blood, without corruption; bodies made up of the finest and thinnest atoms; such bodies, which if compared with ours, were as no bodies. The Sadducees also, who denied all spirits, and yet acknowledged a God, must conclude him to be a body and no spirit. Some among christians have been of that opinion. Tertullian is charged by some, and excused by others; and some monks of Egypt were so fierce for this error that they attempted to kill one Theophilus a bishop, for not being of that judgment. But the wiser heathens were of another mind, and esteemed it an unholy thing to have such imaginations of God. And some Christians have thought God only to be free from any thing of body, because he is omnipresent, immutable, he is only incorporeal and spiritual; all things else, even the angels, are clothed with bodies, though of a finer matter, and a more active frame than ours; a pure spiritual nature they allowed to no being but God. Scripture and reason meet together to assert the spirituality of God. Had God had the lineaments of a body, the Gentiles had not fallen under that accusation of *changing his glory into that of a corruptible man. Rom.* 1. 23.

This is signified by the name God gives himself, *Exod.* 3. 14, *I am that I am*, a simple, pure, uncompounded Being, without any created mixture; as infinitely above

* Thes. Sedan. part. 2. p. 1000.

† Vossius Idolol. lib. 2. cap. 1. Forbes Instrument, l. 1. c. 36.

‡ Ὀυκ ὅσιον. Plutarch incorporalis ratio divinus spiritus Seneca.

the being of creatures, as above the conceptions of creatures. *Job* 37. 23. *Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out.* He is so much a spirit, that he is the *Father of spirits, Heb.* 12. 9. The Almighty Father is not of a nature inferior to his children. The soul is a spirit, it could not else exert actions without the assistance of the body, as the act of understanding itself, and its own nature, the act of willing, and willing things against the incitements and interest of the body; it could not else conceive of God, angels, and immaterial substances; it could not else be so active, as with one glance to fetch a compass from earth to heaven, and by a sudden motion, to elevate the understanding from an earthly thought, to the thinking of things as high as the highest heavens. If we have this opinion of our souls, which in the nobleness of their acts surpass the body, without which the body is but a dull inactive piece of clay; we must needs have a higher conception of God, than to clog him with any matter, though of a finer temper than ours; we must conceive of him by the perfections of our souls, without the vileness of our bodies. If God made man according to his image, we must raise our thoughts of God according to the noblest part of that image, and imagine the copy, not to come short, but to exceed the original. God were not the most excellent substance, if he were not a spirit; spiritual substances are more excellent than bodily; the soul of man more excellent than other animals; angels more excellent than men; they contain in their own nature, whatsoever dignity there is in the inferior creatures. God must have therefore an excellency above all those, and therefore is intirely remote from the conditions of a body.

* It is a gross conceit therefore to think that God is such a spirit as the air is, for that is to be a body as the air is, though it be a thin one; and if God were no more a spirit than that, or than angels, he would not be the most simple being. † Yet some think that the spiritual Deity was represented by the air in the ark of

* Calov. Socin. Proflig. p. 129, 130. † Amirald Sup. Heb. 9. p. 146. &c.

the testament. It was unlawful to represent him by any image that God had prohibited; every thing about the ark had a particular signification. The gold and other ornaments about it signified something of Christ, but were unfit to represent the nature of God; a thing purely invisible and falling under nothing of sense, could not represent him to the mind of man: The air in the ark was the fittest, it represented the invisibility of God, air being imperceptible to our eyes. Air diffuseth itself through all parts of the world, it glides through secret passages into all creatures, it fills the space between heaven and earth; and there is no place wherein God is not present.

To evidence this, 1. If God were not a spirit, *he could not be Creator*. All multitude begins in, and is reduced to unity. As above multitude there is an absolute unity; so above mixed creatures, there is an absolute simplicity; you cannot conceive number without conceiving the beginning of it in that which was not number, viz. a unit: you cannot conceive any mixture, but you must conceive some simple thing to be the original and basis of it. The works of art, done by rational creatures, have their foundation in something spiritual. Every artificer, hath a model in his own mind of the work he designs to frame: the material and outward fabric is squared according to an inward and spiritual idea. A spiritual idea speaks a spiritual faculty as the subject of it. God could not have an idea of that vast number of creatures he brought into being; if he had not a spiritual nature. * The wisdom whereby the world was created could never be the fruit of a corporeal nature; such natures are not capable of understanding and comprehending the things which are within the compass of their nature, much less of producing them: and therefore beasts which have only corporeal faculties, move to objects by the force of their sense, and have no knowledge of things as they are comprehended by the understanding of man. All acts of wisdom speak an intelligent and spiritual agent: the effects of wisdom, goodness, power, are so great and ad-

* Amiral. moral. Tom. 1. p. 282.

mirable, that they bespeak him a more perfect and eminent being, than can possibly be beheld under a bodily shape. Can a corporeal substance put *wisdom in the inward parts and give understanding to the heart?* Job 38. 16.

2. If God were not a *pure spirit, he could not be one.* If God had a body consisting of distinct members, as ours; or all of one nature, as the water and air are, yet he were then capable of division, and therefore could not be entirely one. Either those parts would be finite or infinite; if finite, they are not parts of God; for to be God and finite is a contradiction: if infinite, then there are as many infinities, as distinct members, and therefore as many Deities. Suppose this body had all parts of the same nature as air and water hath, every little part of air is as much air as the greatest, and every little part of water is as much water as the ocean; so every little part of God would be as much God as the whole; as many particular deities to make up God, as little atoms to compose a body: what can be more absurd? If God had a body like a human body, and were compounded of body and soul, of substance and quality, he could not be the most perfect unity; he would be made up of distinct parts, and those of a distinct nature, as the members of a human body are: where there is the greatest *unity*, there must be the greatest *simplicity;* but God is one: as he is free from any change, so he is void of any compound, *Deut.* 6. 4, *The Lord our God is one Lord.*

3. If God had a body as we have, *he would not be invisible.* Every material thing is not visible: the air is a body invisible, but it is sensible; the cooling quality of it is felt by us at every breath, and we know it by our touch, which is the most material sense. Every body, that hath members like to bodies, is visible: but God is invisible.* The apostle reckons this amongst his other perfections. *Now unto the king, eternal, immortal, invisible.* 1 *Tim.* 1. 17. He is invisible to our sense, which beholds nothing but material and coloured things; and incomprehensible to

* Daille, in. Tim.

our understanding that conceives nothing but what is finite. God is therefore a spirit incapable of being seen, and infinitely incapable of being understood. If he be invisible, he is also spiritual. If he had a body, and hid it from our eyes, he might be said not to be seen, but could not be said to be invisible. When we say a thing is visible, we understand that it hath such qualities which are the object of sense, though we may never see that, which in its own nature is to be seen. God hath no such qualities as fall under the perception of our sense. His works are visible to us, but not his godhead. *Rom.* 1. 20; The nature of a human body is to be seen and handled. Christ gives us such a description of it, *Luke* 24. 39, *Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have*: but man hath been so far from seeing God, *that it is impossible he can see him*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 16. There is such a disproportion between an infinite object and a finite understanding, that it is utterly impossible either to behold or comprehend him. But if God had a body more luminous and glorious than that of the sun, he would be as visible to us as the sun, though the immensity of that light would dazzle our eyes, and forbid any close inspection into him by the virtue of our sense. We have seen the shape and figure of the sun, but *no man hath ever seen the shape of God*, *John* 5. 37. If God had a body he were visible, though he might not perfectly and fully be seen by us; * as we see the heavens, though we see not the extension, latitude, and greatness of them. Though God hath manifested himself in a bodily shape, *Gen.* 18. 1; and elsewhere, Jehovah appeared to Abraham; yet the substance of God was not seen, no more than the substance of angels was seen in their apparitions to men. A body was formed to be made visible by them, and such actions done in that body, that spake the person that did them to be of a higher eminence than a bare corporeal creature. Sometimes a representation is made to the inward sense and imagination, as to Micaiah, 1 *Kings* 22. 19, and to *Isaiah chap.* 6. 1. But they saw

* Goulart. de Dieu. page 94.

not the essence of God, but some images and figures of him proportioned to their sense or imagination. The essence of God no man ever saw, nor can see. *John* 1. 18. * Nor doth it follow, that God hath a body, because Jacob is said to *see God face to face, Gen.* 32. 30. And Moses had the like privilege, *Deut.* 34. 10. This only signifies a fuller and clearer manifestation of God, by some representations offered to the bodily sense, or rather to the inward spirit; for God tells Moses *he could not see his face, Exod.* 33. 20. And that none ever saw the similitude of God, *Deut.* 4. 15. Were God a corporeal substance he might in some measure be seen by corporeal eyes.

4. If God were not a spirit, *he could not be infinite.* All bodies are of a finite nature. Every body is material, and every material thing is terminated. The sun, a vast body, hath a bounded greatness. The heavens are of a mighty bulk, yet have their limits. If God had a body he must consist of parts, and those parts would be bounded and limited; and whatsoever is limited is of a finite virtue, and therefore below an infinite nature. Reason therefore tells us, that the most excellent nature, as God is, cannot be of a corporeal condition; because of the limitation and other actions which belong to every body. God is infinite, *for the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, 2 Chron.* 2. 6. The largest heavens, and those imaginary spaces beyond the world, are no bounds to him. He hath an essence beyond the bounds of the world, and cannot be included in the vastness of the heavens. If God be infinite, then he can have no parts in him; if he had, they must be finite, or infinite: finite parts can never make up an infinite being. A vessel of gold of a pound weight cannot be made of the quantity of an ounce. Infinite parts they cannot be; because then every part would be equal to the whole, as infinite as the whole, which is contradictory. We see in all things every part is less than the whole bulk that is composed of it: as every member of a man is less than the whole body of

* Goulart. de Dieu. page 95, 96.

man: if all the parts were finite, then God in his essence were finite; and a finite God is not more excellent than a creature. So that if God were not a spirit, he could not be infinite.

5. If God were not a spirit, he could not be *an independent being*. Whatsoever is compounded of many parts, depends either essentially or integrally upon those parts; as the essence of a man depends upon the conjunction and union of his soul and body; when they are separated the essence of a man ceaseth, and the perfection of a man depends upon every member of the body; so that if one be wanting, the perfection of the whole is wanting. As if a man hath lost a limb, you call him not a perfect man; because that part is gone upon which his perfection, as an entire man, depended. If God therefore had a body, the perfection of the Deity would depend upon every part of that body; and the more parts he were compounded of, the more his dependency would be multiplied according to the number of those parts of the body; for that which is compounded of many parts is more dependent than that which is compounded of fewer. And because God would be a dependent being if he had a body, he could not be the first being; for the compounding parts are in order of nature before that which is compounded by them; as the soul and body are before the man which results from the union of them. If God had parts and bodily members as we have, or any composition, the essence of God would result from those parts, and those parts be supposed to be before God. For that which is a part, is before that whose part it is; as in artificial things you may conceive it. All the parts of a watch are in time before that watch which is made by setting those parts together. In natural things, you must suppose the members of a body framed, before you can call it a man, so that the parts of this body are before that which is constituted by them. We can conceive no other of God, if he were not a pure, entire, unmixed spirit; if he had distinct parts, he would depend upon them; those parts would be before him; his essence would be the effect of those distinct parts, and so

he would not be absolutely and entirely the first being. But he is so, *Isa.* 44. 6, *I am the first and I am the last.* He is the first; nothing is before him; whereas if he had bodily parts, and those finite, it would follow, God is made up of those parts which are not God; and that which is not God, is in order of nature before that which is God. So that we see if God were not a spirit, he could not be independent.

6. If God were not a spirit, he *were not immutable and unchangeable.* His immutability depends upon his simplicity. He is unchangeable in his essence, because he is a pure, unmixed, and spiritual being. Whatsoever is compounded of parts, may be divided into those parts, and resolved into those distinct parts which make up and constitute the nature. Whatsoever is compounded, is changeable in its own nature, though it should never be changed. Adam, who was constituted of body and soul, had he stood in innocence, had not died; there had been no separation made between his soul and body whereof he was constituted, and his body had not resolved into those principles of dust from whence it was extracted. Yet in his own nature he was dissoluble into those distinct parts whereof he was compounded; and so the glorified saints in heaven, after the resurrection and the happy meeting of their souls and bodies in a new marriage knot, shall never be dissolved; yet in their own nature they are mutable and dissoluble, and cannot be otherwise, because they are made up of such distinct parts that may be separated in their own nature, unless sustained by the grace of God. They are immutable by will, the will of God, not by nature. God is immutable by nature as well as will: as he hath a necessary existence, so he hath a necessary unchangeableness, *Mal.* 3. 6, *I the Lord change not.* He is as unchangeable in his essence, as in his veracity and faithfulness; they are perfections belonging to his nature. But if he were not a pure spirit, he could not be immutable by nature.

7. If God were not a pure spirit, *he could not be omnipresent. He is in heaven above, and the earth below: Deut.* 4. 39. *He fills heaven and earth. Jer.* 23. 24.

The divine essence is at once in heaven and earth; but it is impossible a body can be in two places at one and the same time. Since God is every where, he must be spiritual. Had he a body, he could not penetrate all things; he would be circumscribed in place. He could not be every where but in parts, not in the whole; one member in one place, and another in another; for to be confined to a particular place, is the property of a body: but since he is diffused through the whole world, *higher than heaven, deeper than hell; longer than the earth, broader than the sea*, *Job* 11. 8, he hath not any corporeal matter. If he had a body wherewith to fill heaven and earth, there could be no body besides his own: it is the nature of bodies to bound one another, and hinder the extending of one another. Two bodies cannot be in the same place in the same point of earth, one excludes the other: and it will follow hence, that we are nothing, no substances, mere illusions; there could be no place for any body else. * If his body were as big as the world; as it must be, if with that he filled heaven and earth, there would not be room for him to move a hand or a foot, or extend a finger; for there would be no place remaining for the motion.

8. If God were not a spirit, he could not be *the most perfect Being*. The more perfect any thing is in the rank of creatures, the more spiritual and simple it is, as gold is the more pure and perfect that hath least mixture of other metals. If God were not a spirit, there would be creatures of a more excellent nature than God; as angels and souls, which the scriptures call spirits, in opposition to bodies. There is more of perfection in the first notion of a spirit, than in the notion of a body. God cannot be less perfect than his creatures, and contribute an excellency of being to them which he wants himself. If angels and souls possess such an excellence, and God want that excellence; he would be less than his creatures, and the excellency of the effects would exceed the excellence of the cause. But every creature, even the

* Gamacheus Theol. Tom. 1. Ques. 3. C. 1.

highest creature, is infinitely short of the perfection of God; for whatsoever excellence they have, is finite and limited; it is but a spark from the sun, a drop from the ocean; but God is unboundedly perfect in the highest manner, without any limitation; and therefore above spirits and angels, the highest creatures that were made by him. An infinite sublimity, a pure act, to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken. 1 *John* 1. 5, *In him there is light and no darkness;* spirituality without any matter; perfection without any shadow or taint of imperfection. Light piereeth into all things, preserves its own purity, and admits of no mixture of any thing else with it.

It may be said, If God be a spirit, and it is impossible he can be otherwise than a spirit, how comes God so often to have *such members as we have in our bodies ascribed to him;* not only a soul, but particular bodily parts, as *heart, arms, hands, eyes, ears, face,* and so on? And how is it that he is never called a *spirit* in plain words, but in this text by our Saviour? We answer, It is true, many parts of the body, and natural affections of the human nature, are reported of God in Scripture. *Head, eyes,* and *eye-lids, apple of the eye, mouth,* &c. our affections also, *grief, joy, anger,* &c. *Dan.* 7. 9. *Psal.* 11. 14. But it is to be considered,

That this is in *condescension to our weakness.** God being desirous to make himself known to man, whom he created for his glory, humbles as it were his own nature to such representations as may suit and assist the capacity of the creature: since by the condition of our nature nothing erects a notion of itself in our understanding, but as it is conducted in by our sense. God hath served himself of those things which are most exposed to our sense, most obvious to our understandings, to give us some acquaintance with his own nature, and those things which otherwise we were not capable of having any notion of. As our souls are linked with our bodies, so is our knowledge with our sense; that

* Loquitur lex secund. ling. filiorum hominum, was the heathen saying.

we can scarce imagine any thing at first but under a corporeal form and figure, till we come by great attention to the object, to make by the help of reason, a separation of the spiritual substance from the corporeal fancy, and consider it in its own nature. We are not able to conceive a spirit, without some kind of resemblance to something below it; nor understand the actions of a spirit, without considering the operations of a human body in its several members. As the glories of another life are signified to us by the pleasures of this; so the nature of God, by a gracious condescension to our capacities, is signified to us by a likeness to our own. The more familiar the things are to us which God uses to this purpose, the more proper they are to teach us what he intends by them.

All such representations are to signify the acts of God, as *they bear some likeness to those, which we perform by those members he ascribes to himself.* So that those members ascribed to him, rather note his visible operations, than his invisible nature; and signify, that God doeth some works like to those which men do, by the assistance of those organs of their bodies. * So the wisdom of God is called his eye, because he knows that with his mind, which we see with our eyes. The efficiency of God is called his hand and arm; because as we act with our hands, so doth God with his power. By his eyes and ears, we understand his omniscience; by his face, the manifestation of his favour; by his mouth the revelation of his will; by his nostrils, the acceptation of our prayers; by his bowels, the tenderness of his compassion; by his heart, the sincerity of his affections; by his hand, the strength of his power; by his feet, the ubiquity of his presence. And in this, he intends instruction and comfort: by his eyes he signifies his watchfulness over us: by his ears, his readiness to hear the cries of the oppressed. *Psal.* 34. 15. By his *arm, his power;* an arm to destroy his enemies, and an arm to relieve his people. *Isa.* 51. 9. All those are

* Amiral. de Trin. p. 218, 219.

attributed to God to signify divine actions, which he doth without bodily organs, as we do with them.

Consider also, that only those members which are the *instruments of the noblest actions*, and under that consideration, are *used by him to represent a notion of him to our minds.* Whatsoever is perfect and excellent, is ascribed to him, but nothing that savours of imperfection. * The heart is ascribed to him, it being the principle of vital actions, to signify the life that he hath in himself; watchful and discerning eyes, not sleepy and lazy ones, a mouth to reveal his will, not to take in food. To eat and sleep are never ascribed to him; nor those parts that belong to the preparing or transmitting nourishment to the several parts of the body, as stomach, liver, reins, nor bowels, under that consideration, but as they are significant of compassion; but only those parts are ascribed to him whereby we acquire knowledge, as eyes and ears, the organs of learning and wisdom: or to communicate it to others, as the mouth, lips, tongue, as they are instruments of speaking, not of tasting: or those parts which signify strength and power, or whereby we perform the actions of charity for the relief of others. Taste, and touch, senses that extend no further than to corporeal things, and are the grossest of all the senses, are never ascribed to him. It were worth consideration, says Zanchie, (Observation, Tom. 2. *de natura Dei, lib.* 1. *cap.* 4. *Thes.* 9.) "whether this describing God by the members of an human body were so much figuratively to be understood, as with respect to the incarnation of our Saviour, who was to assume the human nature and all the members of a human body." Asaph, speaking in the person of God, *Psal.* 78. 1, says, *I will open my mouth in parables.* In regard of God it is to be understood figuratively, but in regard of Christ literally, to whom it is applied, *Matth.* 13. 34, 35. And that apparition, *Isa.* 6, which was the appearance of Jehovah, is applied to Christ, *John* 12. 40, 41.

* Episcop. institu. l. 4. § 3. c. 3.

* After the report of the creation, and the forming of man, we read of God's speaking to him, but not of God's appearing to him in any visible shape. A voice might be formed in the air to give man notice of his duty; some way of information he must have what positive laws he was to observe, besides that law which was engraven in his nature, which we call the law of nature: and without a voice, the knowledge of the divine will could not be so conveniently communicated to man; though God was heard in a voice, he was not seen in a shape; but after the fall we several times read of his appearing in such a form. Though we read of his speaking before man's committing of sin, yet not of his *walking*, which is more corporeal, till afterwards *Gen.* 3. 8. Though God would not have man believe him to be corporeal, yet he judged it expedient to give some pre-notices of that divine incarnation which he had promised.

Therefore we must not conceive of the visible Deity *according to the letter* of such expressions, *but the true intent of them.* Though the scriptures speak of his arms, yet he denies them to be *arms of flesh*, *Job* 10. 4. 2 *Chron.* 32. 8. We must not conceive of God according to the letter, but the design of the metaphor. When we hear things described by metaphorical expressions for the clearing them up to our fancy, we conceive not of them under that garb, but remove the vail by an act of our reason. When Christ is called a *sun*, a *vine*, *bread*, is any one so stupid as to conceive him to be a vine with material branches and clusters; or to be of the same nature with the bread? But the things designed by such metaphors are obvious to the conception of a mean understanding. If we would conceive God to have a body like a man, because he describes himself so, we may conceive him to be like a bird, because he is mentioned with *wings*, *Psal.* 36. 7, or like a *lion* or *leopard*, because he likens himself to them in the acts of his strength and fury, *Hos.* 13. 7, 8. He is called a *rock*, a *horn*, *fire*, to denote his strength and wrath; if any be so stupid as to think

* Amiraut. Moral. Tom. p. 1. 293, 294.

God to be really such, they would make him not only a man but worse than a monster. * Onkelos, the Chaldee Paraphrast upon parts of the scripture, was so tender of expressing the notion of any corporiety in God, that when he meets with any expressions of that nature, he translates them according to the true intent of them; as when God is said to descend, *Gen.* 11. 5, which implies a local motion, a motion from one place to another, he translates it, and God *revealed himself.* We should conceive of God according to the design of the expressions: when we read of his eyes, we should conceive his omniscience; of his hand, his power; of his sitting, his immutability; of his throne, his majesty; and conceive of him as surmounting, not only the grossness of bodies, but the spiritual excellency of the most dignified creatures; something so perfect, great, and spiritual, as nothing can be conceived higher and purer. † Christ, saith one, is truly *Deus figuratus;* and for his sake, was it more easily permitted to the Jews to think of God in the shape of a man.

* Maimon. More Nevoc. par. 1. cap. 27.

† Mores conjectura cabalistica, pa. 122.

PART II.

INFERENCES FROM THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD.

Man not the image of God in external form—Images of God unreasonable—Impossible to represent God by any image—The attempt is unworthy of God—What constitutes idolatry—How to conceive of God—Right conceptions of God essential to our worship and enjoyment of him.

IF God be a pure spiritual being, then

(1.) Man is not the image of God, *according to his external bodily form and figure.* The image of God in man consisted not in what is seen, but in what is not seen; not in the conformation of the members, but rather in the spiritual faculties of the soul; or most of all, in the holy endowments of those faculties, *Eph.* 4. 24, *That ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Col.* 3. 10. The image which is restored by redeeming grace, was the image of God by original nature. The image of God cannot be in that part which is common to us with beasts, but rather in that wherein we excel all living creatures, in reason, understanding, and an immortal spirit. God expressly saith, that none *saw a similitude* of him, *Deut.* 4. 15, 16, which had not been true, if man in regard of his body had been the image and similitude of God; for then a figure of God had been seen every day, as often as we saw a man or beheld ourselves. Nor would the apostle's argument stand good, *Acts* 17. 29, *That the Godhead is not like a stone graven by art,* if we were not the offspring of God, and bore

the stamp of his nature in our spirits rather than our bodies. * It was a fancy of Eugubinus, that when God set upon the actual creation of man, he took a bodily form for an example of that which he would express in his work, and therefore that the words of Moses, *Gen. 1. 26*, are to be understood of the body of man; because there was in man such a shape which God had then assumed. To let alone God's forming himself a body for that work, as a groundless fancy; man can in no wise be said to be the image of God, in regard of the substance of his body; but beasts may as well be said to be made in the image of God, whose bodies have in general the same members as the body of man, and excel men in the acuteness of the senses and swiftness of their motion, agility of body, greatness of strength, and in some kind of ingenuities also, wherein man hath been a scholar to the brutes, and beholden to their skill. The soul comes nearest the nature of God, as being a spiritual substance; yet considered singly in regard of its spiritual substance, cannot well be said to be the image of God. A beast. because of its corporiety, may as well be called the image of a man; for there is a greater similitude between a man and a brute in the rank of bodies, than there can be between God and the highest angels, in the rank of spirits. If it does not consist in the substance of the soul, much less can it in any similitude of the body. This image consisted partly in the state of man, as he had dominion over the creatures; partly in the nature of man as he was an intelligent being, and thereby was capable of having a grant of that dominion; but principally in the conformity of the soul with God in the frame of his spirit, and the holiness of his actions. Not at all in the figure and form of his body physically, though morally there might be, as there was a rectitude in the body, as an instrument to conform to the holy motions of the soul, as the holiness of the soul sparkled in the actions and members of the body. If man were like God because he hath a body, whatsoever hath a body hath some resemblance to God, and may be said to be in part his

* Petav. Theol. Dog. Tom. 1. lib. 2. cap. 1. p. 104.

image. But the truth is, the essence of all creatures cannot be an image of the immense essence of God.

(2.) If God be a pure spirit; it is *unreasonable* to frame any image or picture of God. * Some heathens have been wiser in this than some christians. Pythagoras forbad his scholars to engrave any shape of him upon a ring, because he was not to be comprehended by sense, but conceived only in our minds; our hands are as unable to fashion him as our eyes to see him. † The ancient Romans worshipped their gods an hundred and seventy years before any material representations of them; ‡ and the ancient idolatrous Germans thought it wicked to represent God in a human shape. Yet some, and those no Romanists, labour to defend the making images of God in the resemblance of man: because he is so represented in scripture, he may be, § saith one conceived so in our minds and figured so to our sense. If this were a good reason, why may he not be pictured as a lion, horn, eagle, rock, since he is under such metaphors shadowed to us? The same ground there is for the one as for the other: what though man be a nobler creature, God hath no more the body of a man, than that of an eagle; and some perfections in other creatures represent some excellencies in his nature and actions, which cannot be figured by a human shape, as strength by the lion, swiftness and readiness by the wings of the bird. But God hath absolutely prohibited the making any image whatsoever of him, and that with terrible threatenings, *Exod.* 20. 5, *I the Lord am a jealous God visiting the iniquities of the father, upon their children,* and *Deut.* 5. 8, 9, after God had given the Israelites the commandment wherein he forbad them to have any other gods before him, he forbids all figuring of him by the hand of man; not only images, but any likeness of him either by things in heaven, in the earth, or in the water. How often doth he discover his indignation by the prophets, against them that offer to mould him in a crea-

* Jamblyc. protrept. cap. 21. Symb. 24.
† Austin de Civitat. Dei, lib. 4. cap. 31. out of Varro. ‡ Tacitus.
§ Gerard loc. Comun. vol. 4. Exegesis de naturâ Dei, cap. 8. § 1.

ture form? This law was not to serve a particular dispensation, or to endure a particular time, but it was a declaration of his will, invariable in all places and all times; being founded upon the immutable nature of his being, and therefore agreeable to the law of nature; otherwise not chargeable upon the heathens. And therefore when God had declared his nature and his works in a stately and majestic eloquence, he demands of them, *to whom they would liken him, or what likeness they would compare unto him? Isa.* 40. 18. Where they could find any thing that would be a lively image and resemblance of his infinite excellence? Founding it upon the infiniteness of his nature, which necessarily implies the spirituality of it. God is infinitely above any statue; and those that think to draw God by a stroke of a pencil, or form him by the engravings of art, are more stupid than the statues themselves.

To shew the unreasonableness of this, consider, 1. It is *impossible* to fashion any image of God. If our more capacious souls cannot grasp his nature, our weaker sense cannot frame his image. It is more possible of the two, to comprehend him in our minds, than to frame him in an image to our sense. He inhabits inaccessible light. As it is impossible for the eye of man to see him, it is impossible for the art of man to paint him upon walls, and carve him out of wood. None knows him but himself, none can describe him but himself.* Can we draw a figure of our own souls, and express that part of ourselves, wherein we are most like to God? Can we extend this to any bodily figure and divide it into parts? How can we deal so with the original copy, whence the first draught of our souls was taken, and which is infinitely more spiritual than men or angels? No corporeal thing can represent a spiritual substance; there is no proportion in nature between them. God is a simple, infinite, immense, eternal, invisible, incorruptible Being: a statue is a compounded, finite, limited, temporal, visible, and corruptible body. God is a living spirit; but a statue, nor sees, nor hears, nor perceives any

* Cocceius sum. Theol. cap. 9. pa. 17. § 35.

thing. But suppose God had a body, it is impossible to mould an image of it in the true glory of that body. Can the statue of an excellent monarch represent the majesty and air of his countenance, though made by the most skilful workman in the world? If God had a body in some measure suited to his excellency, were it possible for man to make an exact image of him, who cannot picture the light, heat, motion, magnitude, and dazzling property of the sun? The excellence of any corporeal nature of the least creature, the temper, instinct, artifice, all are beyond the power of art; much more is God.

2. To make any corporeal representation of God is *unworthy of God.* It is a disgrace to his nature. Whosoever thinks a carnal corruptible image to be fit for a representation of God, renders God no better than a carnal and corporeal being. It is debasing an angel, who is a spiritual nature, to represent him in a bodily shape, who is as far removed from any thing corporeal as heaven from earth; much more to degrade the glory of the divine nature to the lineaments of a man. The whole stock of images is but a lie of God, *Jer.* 10. 8, 14, *A doctrine of vanities and falsehood;* it represents him in a false garb to the world, and sinks his glory into that of a corruptible creature, *Rom.* 1. 23. It impairs the reverence of God in the minds of men, and by degrees may debase men's apprehensions of God, and be a means to make them believe he is such a one as themselves; and that not being free from the figure, he is not also free from the imperfections of their bodies. Corporeal images of God were the fruits of base imaginations of him; and as they sprung from them, so they contribute to a greater corruption of the notions of the divine nature. The heathens begun their first representations of him by the image of a corruptible man, then of birds, till they descended, not only to four-footed beasts, but creeping things, even serpents, as the apostle seems to intimate in his enumeration, *Rom.* 1. 23. It had been more honourable to have continued in human representation of him, than have sunk so low as beasts and serpents, the baser images; though the first had been infinitely

unworthy of him, he being more above a man, though the noblest creature, than man is above a worm, or the most despicable creeping thing upon the earth. To think we can make an image of God of a piece of marble, or an ingot of gold is a greater debasing of him, than it would be of a great prince, if you should represent him in the statue of a frog. When the Israelites represented God by a calf, it is said, *they sinned a great sin, Exod.* 32. 31. And the sin of Jeroboam, who intended only a representation of God by the calves at Dan and Bethel, is called more emphatically, *Hosea* 10. 15. רעתרעתכם *the wickedness of your wickedness*, the very scum and dregs of wickedness. As men debased God *by* this, so God debased men *for* this; he degraded the Israelites into captivity under the worst of their enemies, and punished the heathens with spiritual judgments, as uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, *Rom.* 1. 24. Which is repeated again in other expressions, *v.* 26, 27. As a meet recompence for their disgracing the spiritual nature of God. Had God been like to man, they had not offended in it. But I mention this, to shew the probable reason of those base lusts which are in the midst of us, that have scarce been exceeded by any nation, viz. the unworthy and unspiritual conceits of God, which are as much a debasing of him as material images were when they were more common in the world; and may be as well the cause of those spiritual judgments upon men, as the worshipping molten and carved images were the cause of the same upon the heathen.

3. Yet this is *natural* to man. Wherein we may see the contrariety of man to God. Though God be a *spirit*, yet there is nothing man is more prone to, than to represent him under a corporeal form. The most famous guides of the heathen world have fashioned him, not only according to the more honourable images of men, but beastialized him in the form of a brute. The Egyptians, whose country was the school of learning to Greece, were notoriously guilty of this brutishness in worshiping an ox for an image of their God; and the Philistines their Dagon, in a figure composed of the image of a woman

and a fish: * such representations were ancient in the oriental parts. The gods of Laban, that he accuseth Jacob of stealing from him, are supposed to be little figures of men. † Such was the Israelites' golden-calf; their worship was not terminated on the image, but they worshipped the true God under that representation: they could not be so brutish as to call a calf their deliverer, and give to him a great title, *these be thy gods O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, Exod.* 32. 4. Or that which they knew belonged to the true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *Gen.* 3. 16, 17. They knew the calf to be formed of their earrings; but they had consecrated it to God as a representation of him; though they chose the form of the Egyptian idol; yet they knew that Apis, Osiris, and Isis, the gods the Egyptians adored in that figure, had not wrought their redemption from bondage, but would have used their force, had they been possessed of any, to have kept them under the yoke, rather than have freed them from it. The feast also which they celebrated before that image, is called by Aaron the feast of the Lord, *Exod.* 32. 5. A feast to Jehovah, the incommunicable name of the Creator of the world: it is therefore evident, that both the priest and the people pretended to serve the true God, not any false divinity of Egypt. That God who had rescued them from Egypt with a mighty hand, divided the Red-sea before them, destroyed their enemies, conducted them, fed them by miracle, who had spoken to them from mount Sinai, and amazed them by his thunderings and lightnings when he instructed them by his law; a God they could not so soon forget. And with this representing God by that image, they are charged by the psalmist, *Psal.* 106. 19, 20, *They made a calf in Horeb, and changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.* They changed their glory, that is, God the glory of Israel; so that they took this figure for the image of the true God of Israel, their own God; not the God of any other nation in the world. Jeroboam in-

* Daille super Cor. 1. 10. Ser. 3. † Gen. 31. 30, 34.

tended no other by his calves, but symbols of the presence of the true God, instead of the ark and the propitiatory which remained among the Jews. We see the inclination of our natures in the practice of the Israelites; a people chosen out of the whole world to bear up God's name, and preserve his glory; and in that the images of God were so soon set up in the christian church; and to this day, the picture of God in the shape of an old man, is visible in the temples of the Romanists.

4. To represent God by a *corporeal image*, and to worship him in and *by that image, is idolatry.* Though the Israelites did not acknowledge the calf to be God, nor intended worship to any of the Egyptian deities by it; but worshipped that God in it, who had so lately and miraculously delivered them from a cruel servitude; and could not in natural reason judge him to be cloathed with a bodily shape, much less to be like an *ox that eateth grass;* yet the apostle brings no less a charge against them, than that of idolatry. Suppose we could make such an image of God as might perfectly represent him; yet since God hath prohibited it, shall we be wiser than God? He hath sufficiently manifested himself in his works without images: he is seen in the creatures; more particularly in the heavens, which declare his glory. His works are more excellent representations of him, as being the works of his own hands, than any thing that is the product of the heart of man. His glory shines in the heavens, sun, moon, and stars, as being magnificent pieces of his wisdom and power; yet the kissing the hand to the sun or the heavens, as representative of the excellency and majesty of God, is idolatry and a denial of God, * *Job* 31. 26, 27, 28, a prostituting the glory of God to a creature. † Either the worship is terminated on the image itself, and then it is confessed by all to be idolatry, because it is giving that worship to a creature which is the sole right of God; or not terminated in the image, but in the object represented by it; it is then a foolish thing; we may as well terminate our wor-

* Chin Predict. part. 2. p. 252. † Lawson Body Divin. p. 161.

ship on the true object without, as with an image. An erected statue is no sign or symbol of God's special presence, as the ark, tabernacle, and temple were. It is no part of divine institution; has no authority of a command to support it; no promise to encourage it; and the image being infinitely distant from, and below the majesty and spirituality of God, cannot constitute one object of worship with him. To put a religious character upon any image formed by the corrupt imagination of man, as a representation of the invisible and spiritual deity; is to think the *godhead* to be *like silver and gold, or stone engraven by art and man's device. Acts* 17. 29.

(3.) This doctrine will direct us in our *conceptions of God*, as a pure perfect spirit, than which nothing can be imagined more perfect, more pure, more spiritual.

We cannot have an *adequate or suitable* conception of God. He dwells in inaccessible light; inaccessible to the acuteness of our fancy, as well as the weakness of our sense. If we could have thoughts of him, as high and excellent as his nature; our conceptions must be as infinite as his nature. All our imaginations of him cannot represent him, because every created species is finite; it cannot therefore represent to us a full and substantial notion of an infinite being. We cannot speak or think worthily enough of him, who is greater than our words, vaster than our understandings. Whatsoever we speak or think of God, is handed first to us by the notice we have of some perfection in the creature; and explains to us some particular excellency of God rather than the fulness of his essence. No creature, nor all creatures together, can furnish us with such a magnificent notion of God, as can give us a clear view of him. Yet God in his word is pleased to step below his own excellency, and point us to those excellencies in his works, whereby we may ascend to the knowledge of those excellencies which are in his nature. But the creatures, whence we draw our lessons being finite, and our understandings being finite, it is utterly impossible to have a notion of God commensu-

rate to the immensity and spirituality of his being. * "God is not like to visible creatures, nor is there any proportion between him and the most spiritual." We cannot have a full notion of a spiritual nature; much less can we have of God, who is a spirit above spirits. No spirit can clearly represent him. The angels that are great spirits, are bounded in their extent, finite in their being, and of a mutable nature.

Yet though we cannot have a suitable conception of God, we must not content ourselves without any conception of him. It is our sin not to endeavour after a true notion of him: it is our sin to rest in a mean and low notion of him, when our reason tells us we are capable of having higher. But if we ascend as high as we can, though we shall then come short of a suitable notion of him; this is not our sin, but our weakness. God is infinitely superior to the choicest conceptions; not only of a sinner, but of a creature. If all conceptions of God below the true nature of God were sin, there is not a holy angel in heaven free from sin; because though they are the most capacious creatures, yet they cannot have such a notion of an infinite being as is fully suitable to his nature, unless they were infinite as he himself is.

But however, we must by no means conceive of God *under a human or corporeal shape.* Since we cannot have conceptions honourable enough for his nature, we must take heed we entertain not any which may debase his nature: though we cannot comprehend him as he is, we must be careful not to fancy him to be what he is not. It is a vain thing to conceive of him with human lineaments; we must think higher of him, than to ascribe to him so mean a shape: we deny his spirituality when we fancy him under such a form. He is spiritual, and between that which is spiritual and that which is corporeal, there is no resemblance. † Indeed Daniel saw God in a human form, *Daniel,* 7. 9. *The*

* Amyrant Moral. Tom. 1. p. 289.
† Episc. institut. li. 4. § 2. c. 17.

ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool. He is described as coming to judgment; it is not meant of Christ probably, because Christ, ver. 13, is called the *Son of man* coming *near to the ancient of days.* This is not the proper shape of God, for no man hath seen his shape. It was a vision wherein such representations were made, as were accommodated to the inward sense of Daniel; Daniel saw him in a rapture or extacy, wherein outward senses are of no use: God is described, not as he is in himself, of a human form, but in regard of his fitness to judge. *White* denotes the purity and simplicity of the divine nature; *ancient of days* in regard of his eternity; *white hair* in regard of his prudence and wisdom, which is more eminent in age than youth, and more fit to discern causes and to distinguish between right and wrong. Visions are riddles, and must not be understood in a literal sense. We are to watch against such determinate conceptions of God. Vain imaginations easily infest us. Tinder will not sooner take fire than our natures kindle into wrong notions of the divine majesty. We are very apt to fashion a god like ourselves: we must therefore look upon such representations of God, as accommodated to our weakness; and no more think them to be literal descriptions of God, as he is in himself, than we can think the image of the sun in the water to be the true sun in the heavens. We may indeed conceive of Christ as man, who hath in heaven the vestment of our nature, and is *deus figuratus*, though we cannot conceive the godhead under a human shape.

1. Such a fancy is to *disparage and wrong God.* A corporeal fancy of God is as ridiculous in itself, and as injurious to God, as a wooden statue. The caprices of our imagination are often more monstrous than the images which are the works of art: it is as irreligious to measure God's essence by our line, his perfections by our imperfections, as to measure his thoughts and actings by the weakness and unworthiness of our own. This is to limit an infinite essence, and bring him down to our

scanty measures, and render that which is inconceivably above us, equal with us. It is impossible we can conceive God after the manner of a body, but we must reduce him down to the proportion of a body, which is to diminish his glory, and sink him below the dignity of his nature. God is a pure spirit, he hath nothing of the nature and tincture of a body; whosoever therefore conceives of him as having a bodily form, though he fancy the most beautiful and comely body, instead of owning his dignity, detracts from the super-eminent excellence of his nature and blessedness. When men fancy God is like themselves in their corporeal nature, they will soon make progress, and ascribe to him their corrupt nature; and while they clothe him with their bodies, invest him also in the infirmities of them. God is a *jealous God*, very sensible of any disgrace, and will be as as much incensed against an inward idolatry as an outward, *Exod.* 20. 4. That command which forbad corporeal images would not indulge carnal imaginations, since the nature of God is as much wronged by unworthy images erected in the fancy, as by statues carved out of stone or metals; one as well as the other is deserting our true spouse and committing adultery, one with a material image, and the other with a carnal notion of God. Since God humbles himself to our apprehensions, we should not debase him in thinking him to be that in his nature, which he makes only a resemblance of himself to us.

2. Such fancies of God will *obstruct and pollute our worship of him.* How is it possible to give him right worship, of whom we have so debasing a notion? We shall never think a corporeal Deity, worthy of a dedication of our spirits. The hating instruction, and casting God's word behind the back, is charged upon the imagination they had, that God *was such a one as themselves*, *Psal.* 50. 17, 21. Many of the wiser heathens did not judge their statues to be their gods, or their gods to be like their statues; but suited them to their political designs; and judged them a good invention to keep people within the bounds of obedience and devotion, by such visible figures of them, as might imprint a reverence and fear

of those gods upon them. But these were false measures; for a despised and undervalued God, is not an object of petition or affection. Who would seriously address a God of whom he has low apprehensions? The more raised thoughts we have of him, the viler sense we shall have of ourselves; they would make us humble and self abhorrent in our supplications to him, *Job* 42. 6, *Wherefore I abhor myself*, &c.

3. Though we must not conceive of God, as of a human or corporeal shape; yet we cannot think of God, without *some reflection upon our own being.* We cannot conceive him to be an intelligent being, but we must make some comparison between him and our own understanding nature, to come to a knowledge of him. Since we are inclosed in bodies, we apprehend nothing but what comes in by sense, and what we in some sort measure by sensible objects. And in the consideration of those things which we desire to abstract from sense, we are fain to make use of the assistances of sense and visible things; and therefore when we frame the highest notion, there will be some similitude of some corporeal thing in our fancy; and though we would spiritualize our thoughts, and aim at a more abstracted and raised understanding, yet there will be some dregs of matter in our conceptions; but we still judge by argument and reasoning, what the thing is we think of under those material images. * A corporeal image will follow us, as the shadow does the body: while we are in the body, and surrounded with fleshly matter, we cannot think of things without some help from corporeal representations. Something of sense will interpose itself in our purest conceptions of spiritual things; for the faculties which serve for contemplation are either corporeal, as the sense and fancy, or so allied to them, that nothing passes into them but by the organs of the body; † so that there is a natural inclination to figure nothing but under a corporeal notion, till by an attentive application of the mind and reason to

* Nazianzen.

† Amirant Moral. tom. 1. p. 180, &c.

the object thought upon, we separate that which is bodily from that which is spiritual, and by degrees ascend to that true notion of that we think upon, and would have a due conception of in our mind. Therefore God tempers the declaration of himself to our weakness, and the condition of our natures; he condescends to our littleness and narrowness, when he declares himself by the similitude of bodily members. As the light of the sun is tempered, and diffuses itself to our sense through the air and vapours, that our weak eyes may not be too much dazzled with it; as without it we could not know or judge of the sun, because we could have no use of our sense, which we must have before we can judge of it in our understanding; so we are not able to conceive of spiritual beings in the purity of their own nature, without such a temperament, and such shadows to usher them into our minds. And therefore we find the spirit of God accommodates himself to our contracted capacities, and uses such expressions of God, as are suited to us in this state of imperfection; and therefore because we cannot apprehend God in the simplicity of his own being, and his undivided essence, he draws the representations of himself from several creatures and several actions of those creatures: as sometimes he is said to be angry, to walk, to sit, to fly; not that we should rest in such conceptions of him, but take our rise from this foundation, and such perfections in the creatures, to mount up to a knowledge of God's nature by those several steps, and conceive of him by those divided excellencies, because we cannot conceive of him in the purity of his own essence. * We cannot possibly think or speak of God, unless we transfer the names of created perfections to him; yet we are to conceive of them in a higher manner when we apply them to the divine nature, than when we consider them in the several creatures formally, exceeding those perfections and excellencies which are in the creature, and in a more excellent manner; † as one saith, "though we cannot comprehend God without

* Lessius. † Towerson on the Commandments. p. 112.

the help of such resemblances, yet we may without making an image of him; so that inability of our's excuseth those apprehensions of him from any way offending against his divine nature." These are not notions so much suited to the nature of God as the weakness of man: they are helps to our meditations, but ought not to be formal conceptions of him. We may assist ourselves in our apprehensions of him, by considering the subtilty and spirituality of air; and the members of a body, without thinking him to be air, or to have any corporeal member. Our reason tells us, that whatsoever is a body, is limited and bounded; and the notion of infiniteness and bodiliness, cannot agree and consist together: and therefore what is offered by our fancy should be purified by our reason.

4. Therefore we are to *elevate and refine* all our notions of God, and *spiritualize our conceptions of him.* Every man is to have a conception of God; therefore he ought to have one of the highest elevation. Since we cannot have a full notion of him, we should endeavour to make it as high and as pure as we can. Though we cannot conceive of God, but some corporeal representations or images in our minds will be conversant with us, as motes in the air when we look upon the heavens; yet our conception may and must rise higher: as when we see the draught of the heavens and earth in a globe, or a kingdom in a map, it helps our conceptions, but does not terminate them: we conceive them to be of a vast extent, far beyond that short description of them. So we should endeavour to refine every representation of God; to rise higher and higher, and have our apprehensions still more purified; separating the perfect from the imperfect, casting away the one, and greatening the other: conceive him to be a spirit diffused through all, containing all, perceiving all. All the perfections of God are infinitely elevated above the excellencies of the creatures; above whatsoever can be conceived by the clearest and most piercing understanding. The nature of God as a spirit, is infinitely superior to whatsoever we can conceive perfect in the notion of a created spirit. Whatsoever God is, he

is infinitely so: he is infinite wisdom, infinite goodness, infinite knowledge, infinite power, infinite spirit, infinitely distant from the weakness of creatures, infinitely above the excellencies of creatures: as easy to be known *that he is*, as impossible to be comprehended *what he is*.

Conceive of him as excellent, without any imperfection. A spirit without parts; great without quantity; perfect without quality; every where without place; powerful without members; understanding without ignorance; wise without reasoning; light without darkness; infinitely more excelling the beauty of all creatures, than the light in the sun, pure and unviolated, exceeds the splendour of the sun, dispersed and divided through a cloudy and misty air. And when you have risen to the highest, conceive him yet infinitely above all you can conceive of spirit, and acknowledge the infirmity of your own minds. And whatsoever conception comes into your minds, say this is not God, God is more than this. If I could conceive him, he were not God; for God is incomprehensibly above whatsoever I can say, whatsoever I can think, and conceive of him.

(4.) If God be a spirit *no corporeal thing can defile him*. Some bring as an argument against the omnipresence of God, that it is a disparagement to the divine essence to be every where, in mean cottages, as well as beautiful palaces and garnished temples. What place can defile a spirit? Is light, which approaches to the nature of spirit, polluted by shining upon a dung-hill, or a sun-beam tainted by darting upon a quag-mire? Doth an angel contract any soil, by stepping into a nasty prison to deliver Peter? What can steam from the most noisome body, to pollute the spiritual nature of God? As he is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, so he is of a more spiritual substance, than to contract any physical pollution from the places where he diffuses himself. Did our Saviour, who had a true body, derive any taint from the lepers he touched, the diseases he cured, or the devils he expelled? God is a pure spirit, and can never be infected with impurity by being present

with all bodies. Bodies only receive defilement from bodies.

(5.) If God be a Spirit, he is *active and communicative.* He is not clogged with heavy and sluggish matter, which is a cause of dulness and inactivity. The more subtile, thin, and approaching nearer the nature of a spirit any thing is; the more diffusive it is. Air is a gliding substance; spreads itself through all regions; pierceth into all bodies; it fills the space between heaven and earth; there is nothing but partakes of the virtue of it. Light, which is an emblem of spirit, insinuates itself into all places, and refreshes all things. As spirits are fuller, so they are more overflowing, more piercing, more operative than bodies. The Egyptians' horses were weak things, because they were *flesh and not spirit*, *Isa.* 31. 3. The soul being a spirit conveys more to the body, than the body can to it. What cannot so great a spirit do for us? What cannot so great a spirit work in us? God being a spirit above all spirits, can pierce into the centre of all spirits; make his way into the most secret recesses, and stamp what he pleases. It is no more to him to turn our spirits, than to make a wilderness become waters, and speak a chaos into a beautiful frame of heaven and earth. He can actuate our souls with infinitely more ease, than our souls can actuate our bodies; he can fix in us what motions, frames, and inclinations he pleases; he can come and settle in our hearts with all his treasures. It is an encouragement to confide in him, when we petition him for spiritual blessings: as he is a spirit, he is possessed with *spiritual blessings*, *Eph.* 1. 3. A spirit delights to bestow things suitable to its nature, as bodies do to communicate what is agreeable to theirs: as he is a Father of spirits, we may go to him for the welfare of our spirits; he being a Spirit, is as able to repair our spirits, as he was to create them. As he is a Spirit, he is indefatigable in acting. The members of the body tire and flag; but whoever heard of a soul wearied with being active? Whoever heard of a weary angel? In the purest simplicity, there is the greatest power, the most efficacious goodness, the most reaching justice to affect the spirit, that can in-

sinuate itself every where to punish wickedness without weariness, as well as to comfort goodness. God is active, because he is Spirit; and if we be like to God, the more spiritual we are, the more active we shall be.

(6.) God being a spirit, is *immortal.* His being immortal, and being invisible are joined together, 1 *Tim.* 1. 17. Spirits are in their nature incorruptible; they can only perish by that hand that framed them. Every compounded thing is subject to mutation; but God being a pure and simple spirit, is without corruption, without any *shadow* of change, *James* 1. 17. Where there is composition, there is some kind of repugnancy of one part against the other; and where there is repugnancy, there is a capability of dissolution. God in regard of his infinite spirituality, hath nothing in his own nature contrary to it; can have nothing in himself which is not himself. The world perishes; friends change and are dissolved; bodies moulder, because they are mutable. God is a spirit in the highest excellency and glory of spirits; nothing is beyond him; nothing above him; no contrariety within him. This is our comfort, if we devote ourselves to him; *this God is our God*; this spirit is our spirit; this is our all, our immutable, our incorruptible support; a spirit that cannot die and leave us.

(7.) If God be a spirit, we see how we can only converse with him *by our spirits.* Bodies and spirits are not suitable to one another. We can only see, know, and embrace a spirit with our spirits. He judges not of us by our corporeal actions, nor our external devotions, by our masks and disguises. He fixes his eye upon the frame of the heart, bends his ear to the groans of our spirits; he is not pleased with outward pomp; he is not a body; therefore the beauty of temples, delicacy of sacrifices, fumes of incense are not grateful to him; by those or any external action, we have no communion with him: a *spirit* when *broken*, is his delightful *sacrifice*, *Psal.* 51. 17. We must therefore have our spirits fitted for him, *Eph.* 4. 23, *be renewed in the spirit of our minds*, that we may be in a posture to live with him, and have intercourse with him. We can never be united to God, but in our

spirits; bodies unite with bodies, spirits with spirits. The more spiritual any thing is, the more closely does it unite. Air has the closest union, nothing meets together sooner than that when the parts are divided by the interposition of a body.

(8.) If God be a spirit, he can only be the *true satisfaction of our spirits.* Spirit can only be filled with a spirit. Content flows from likeness and suitableness: as we have a resemblance to God in the spiritual nature of our souls, so we can have no satisfaction but in him. Spirit can no more be really satisfied with that which is corporeal, than a beast can delight in the company of an angel. Corporeal things can no more fill a hungry spirit, than pure spirit can feed an hungry body. God the highest spirit, can only reach out a full content to our spirits. Man is lord of the creation; nothing below him can be fit for his converse; nothing above him offers itself to his converse but God. We have no correspondence with angels: the influence they have upon us, the protection they afford us, is secret and undiscerned; but God, the highest Spirit, offers himself to us in his Son, and in his ordinances; he is visible in every creature, he presents himself to us in every providence; to him we must seek; in him we must rest. God had no rest from the creation, till he had made man; and man can have no rest in the creation, till he rests in God. God only is our *dwelling place, Psal.* 90. 1; our souls should only *long for him, Psal.* 63. 1; our souls should only *wait upon him.* The spirit of man never riseth to its original glory, till carried up on the wings of faith and love to its original copy. The face of the soul looks most beautiful, when it is turned to the face of God the Father of spirits; when the derived spirit is fixed upon the original spirit, drawing from it life and glory, Spirit is only the receptacle of spirit. God as spirit is our principle; we must therefore live upon him. God as spirit, hath some resemblance to us as his image; we must therefore only satisfy ourselves in him.

(9.) Inference. If God be a spirit, we should take most care of that *wherein we are like to God.* Spirit is

nobler than body; we must therefore value our spirits above our bodies. The soul, as spirit, partakes more of the divine nature, and deserves more of our choicest cares. If we have any love to this spirit, we should have a real affection to our own spirits, as bearing a stamp of the divinity, the chief of all the works of God, as it is said of Behemoth, *Job* 40. 19. That which is most the image of this immense spirit, should be the supreme object of our delight. Shall we take care of that wherein we partake not of God, and not delight in the jewel which hath his own signature upon it? God was not only the framer of spirits, and the end of spirits; but the copy and exemplar of spirits. God partakes of no corporiety, he is pure spirit. But how do we act, as if we were only matter and body! We have but little kindness for this great Spirit as well as our own, if we take no care of his immediate offspring, since he is not only spirit, but the Father of spirits, *Heb.* 12. 9.

(10.) Inference. If God be a spirit, let us take heed of those *sins which are spiritual.* Paul distinguished between the filth of the flesh, and of the spirit. 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. By the one we defile the body; by the other we defile the spirit, which in regard of its nature is of kin to the Creator. To wrong one who is near of kin to a prince, is worse than to injure an inferior subject. When we make our spirits, which are most like to God in their nature, and framed according to his image, the seat of vain imaginations, wicked desires, and unclean affections, we wrong God in the excellency of his work, and reflect upon the nobleness of the pattern; we wrong him in that part where he hath stamped the most signal character of his own spiritual nature; we defile that whereby we have only converse with him as a spirit, which he hath ordered more immediately to represent him in this nature, than all corporeal things in the world can, and make that spirit with whom we desire to be joined, unfit for such a union. God's spirituality is the root of his other perfections. We have already heard that he could not be infinite, omnipresent, immutable without it. Spiritual sins are the greatest root of bitterness within us. As grace

in our spirits renders us more like to a spiritual God: so spiritual sins bring us into a conformity to a degraded devil, *Eph.* 2. 2, 3. Carnal sins change us from men to brutes, and spiritual sins divest us of the image of God for the image of Satan. We should by no means degrade our spirits, which bear upon them the character of the spiritual nature of God, and were made for his residence: Let us therefore behave ourselves towards God in all those ways which the spiritual nature of God requires us.

PART III.

THE WORSHIP DUE TO GOD.

General propositions—Worship of God founded on his spirituality—The light of nature teaches that he must be worshipped—Worship always required, always offered—Legal ceremonies and services—Never intended to be durable—Spiritual worship—Bodily worship—Jesus Christ the most spiritual worshipper, worshipped in his own body.

HAVING thus dispatched the first proposition, *God is a spirit;* it will not be amiss to handle the inference our Saviour makes from that proposition, which is the second observation propounded: That the worship due from us to God *ought to be spiritual, and spiritually performed. Spirit and truth* are understood variously.

And, 1. We are not to worship God by *legal ceremonies.* The evangelical administration, being called *spirit* in opposition to the legal ordinances as carnal; and *truth*

in opposition to them as typical. As the whole Judaical service is called *flesh;* so the whole evangelical service is called *spirit.* Or *spirit* may be opposed to the worship at Jerusalem, as it was *carnal; truth,* to the worship on the mount Gerizim, because it was *false.* They had not the true object of worship, nor the true medium of worship as those at Jesuralem had. Their worship should cease, because it was false; and the Jewish worship should cease because it was carnal. There is no need of a candle when the sun spreads its beams in the air; and there was no need of those ceremonies when the sun of righteousness appeared; they only served for a candle to instruct and direct men till the time of his coming. The shadows are chased away by displaying the substance, so that they can be of no more use in the worship of God, since the end for which they were instituted is expired; and that is discovered to us in the gospel which the Jews sought for in vain in their ceremonies.

2. With *a spiritual and sincere frame. In spirit,* i. e. with spirit; with the inward operations of all the faculties of our souls, and the cream and flower of them. And the reason is, because there ought to be a worship suitable to the nature of God. And as the worship was to be spiritual, so the exercise of that worship ought to be in a spiritual manner. * It shall be a worship in truth, because the true God shall be adored without those vain imaginations and phantastic resemblances of him, which were common among the blind Gentiles, and contrary to the glorious nature of God, and unworthy ingredients in religious services. It shall be a worship *in spirit,* without those carnal rites which the degenerate Jews rested on; such a posture of soul which is the life and ornament of every service God looks for at your hands. There must be some proportion between the object adored, and the manner in which we adore it. It must not be a mere corporeal worship, because God is not a body; but it must rise from the centre of our soul, because God is a spirit. If he were a body, a bodily

* Lingend. tom. 2. p. 777. Taylor's Exemplar, preface, § 30.

worship might suit him, images might be fit to represent him; but being a spirit, our bodily services bring us not into communion with him. Being a spirit we must banish from our minds all carnal imaginations of him, and separate from our wills all cold and dissembled affections to him. We must not only have a loud voice, but an elevated soul; not only a bended knee, but a broken heart; not only a supplicating tone, but a groaning spirit; not only a ready ear for the word, but a receiving heart; and this shall be of greater value with him, than the most costly outward services offered at Gerizim or Jerusalem.

Our Saviour certainly meant not by worshipping in spirit, only the matter of the evangelical service, as opposed to the legal administration, without the manner wherein it was to be performed. It is true, God always sought a worship in spirit; he expected the heart of the worshipper should join with his instituted rights of adoration in every exercise of them: but he expects such a carriage more under the gospel administration, because of the clearer discoveries of his nature made in it, and the greater assistances conveyed by it.

I shall therefore, 1. Lay down some general propositions. 2. Shew what this spiritual worship is. 3. Why we must offer to God a spiritual service. 4. The use.

1. Some *general propositions.*

Proposition 1. First, the right exercise of worship is *founded upon and riseth from the spirituality of God.** The first ground of the worship we render to God, is the infinite excellency of his nature, which is not only one attribute, but results from all: for God, as God, is the object of worship; and the notion of God consists not in thinking him wise, good, just, but all those infinitely beyond any conception. And hence it follows that God is an object infinitely to be loved and honoured. His goodness is sometimes spoken of in scripture as a motive of our homage. *Psal.* 130. 4. *There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.* Fear in the scrip-

* Ames medul lib. 2. cap. 1, § 20.

ture dialect signifies the whole worship of God. *Acts* 10. 35, *But in every nation he that fears him is accepted of him*, 2 *Kings*, 17. 32, 33. If God should act towards men according to the rigours of his justice for the least of their crimes, there could be no exercise of any affection but that of despair, which could not engender a worship of God which ought to be joined with love, not with hatred. The beneficence and patience of God, and his readiness to pardon men, is the reason of the honour they return to him. And this is so evident a motive, that generally the idolatrous world ranked those creatures in the number of their gods, which they perceived useful and beneficial to mankind; as the sun and moon, the Egyptians the ox, &c. And the more beneficial any thing appeared to mankind, the higher station men gave it in the rank of their deities, and bestowed a more peculiar and solemn worship upon it. Men worshipped God to procure or continue his favour, which would not have been acted by them, had they not conceived it a pleasing thing to him to be merciful and gracious.

Sometimes his justice is proposed to us as a motive of worship, *Heb.* 12. 28, 29. Serve God *with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire;* which includes his holiness, whereby he hates sin, as well as his wrath, whereby he punishes it. Who but a mad and totally brutish person, or one that was resolved to make war against heaven, could behold the effects of God's anger in the world, consider him in his justice as a consuming fire, and despise him, and rather be drawn out by that consideration to blasphemy and despair, than to seek all ways to appease him? Now though the infinite power of God, his unspeakable wisdom, his incomprehensible goodness, the holiness of his nature, the vigilance of his providence, the bounty of his hand signify to man, that he should love and honour him, and are the *motives* of worship; yet the spirituality of his nature is the *rule* of worship, and directs us to render our duty to him with all the powers of our soul. As his goodness beams out upon us, worship is due in justice

to him; and as he is the most excellent nature, veneration is due to him in the highest manner with the choicest affections.

So that indeed the spirituality of God comes chiefly into consideration in our worship. All his perfections are grounded upon this; he could not be infinite, immutable, and omniscient if he were a corporeal being. * We cannot give him our worship unless we judge him worthy, excellent, and deserving worship at our hands; and we cannot judge him worthy of worship, unless we have some apprehensions and admirations of his infinite virtues; and we cannot apprehend and admire those perfections, but as we see them as causes shining in their effects. When we see therefore the frame of the world to be the work of his power; the order of the world to be the fruit of his wisdom, and the usefulness of the world to be the product of his goodness; we find the motives and reasons of worship; and weighing that this power, wisdom, and goodness, infinitely transcend any corporeal nature; we find a rule of worship, that it ought to be offered by us in a manner *suitable* to such a nature, as is infinitely above any bodily being. His being a spirit declares what he is, his other perfections declare what kind of spirit he is. All God's perfections suppose him a spirit; all centre in this. His wisdom does not suppose him merciful, or his mercy suppose him omniscient. There may be distinct notions of these, but all suppose him to be of a spiritual nature. How cold and frozen will our devotions be, if we consider not his omniscience, whereby he discerns our hearts? How carnal will our services be, if we consider him not as a pure spirit? In our offers to, and transactions with men, we deal not with them as mere animals, but as rational creatures; and we debase their natures if we treat them otherwise: and if we have not raised apprehensions of God's spiritual nature in our treating with him, but allow him only such frames as we think fit enough for men; we debase his sprituality to the little-

* Amyrald dissert. 6. disp. 1. pa. 12.

ness of our own being. We must therefore possess our souls with this, we shall else render him no better than a fleshly service. We do not much concern ourselves in those things, of which we are utterly ignorant, or of which we have but slight apprehensions.

Proposition 2. This spiritual worship of God is *manifest by the light of nature,* to be due to him. In reference to this, consider,

The outward means or matter of that worship which would be acceptable to God, was *not known by the light of nature.* The law for worship, and for spiritual worship, by the faculties of our souls was natural, and part of the law of creation; though the determination of the particular acts, whereby God would have this homage testified, was of positive institution, and depended not upon the law of creation. Though Adam, in innocence, knew God was to be worshipped; yet by nature he did not know by what outward acts he was to pay this respect, or at what time he was more solemnly to be exercised in it than at another. This depended upon the directions God, as the sovereign governor and law-giver, should prescribe. You therefore find the positive institutions of the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil,* and the determination of the time of worship, *Gen.* 2. 3, 17. Had there been any such notion in Adam naturally, as strong as that other, that a worship was due to God, there would have been found some reliques of these modes universally consented to by mankind, as well as of the other: but though all nations have by an universal consent concurred in the acknowledgment of the being of God, and his right to adoration, and the obligation of the creature to it; and that there ought to be some public rule and polity in matters of religion; (for no nation hath been without a worship, and without external acts and certain ceremonies to signify that worship) yet their modes and rites have been as various as their climates; unless in that common notion of sacrifices, not descending to them by nature, but tradition from Adam; and the various ways of worship have been more provoking than pleasing. Every nation suited the

kind of worship to their particular ends and polities by which they designed to rule. How God was to be worshipped, is more difficult to be discerned by blind nature, than with clear eyes:* The pillars upon which the worship of God stands, cannot be discerned without revelation, no more than blind Samson could tell where the pillars of the Philistines' theatre stood, without one to conduct him. What Adam could not see with his sound eyes, we cannot see with our dim eyes; he must be told from heaven, what worship was fit for the God of heaven. It is not by nature that we can have such a full prospect of God as may content and quiet us; this is the noble effect of divine revelation; he only knows himself, and can only make himself known to us. It could not be supposed, that an infinite God should have no perfections but what were visible in the works of his hands; and that these perfections should not be infinitely greater, than as they were sensible in their present effects; this had been to apprehend God a mean limited being. Now it is impossible to honour God as we ought, unless we know him as he is; and we could not know him as he is without divine revelation from himself; for none but God can acquaint us with his own nature: and therefore the nations void of this conduct, heap up modes of worship from their own imaginations, unworthy of the majesty of God, and below the nature of man: a rational man would scarce have owned such for signs of honour, as the scripture mentions in the services of Baal and Dagon. Much less an infinitely wise and glorious God. And when God had signified his mind to his own people, how unwilling were they to rest satisfied with God's determination, but would be warping to their own inventions, and make gods and ways of worship to themselves? *Amos. 5. 26.* As in the matter of the Golden Calf.

Though the outward manner of worship acceptable to God, could not be known without revelation, and those revelations might be various; *yet the inward manner of worship with our spirits was manifest by nature.* And

* King on Jonah. p. 63.

not only manifest by nature to Adam in innocence, but after his Fall, and the scales he had brought upon his understanding by that Fall. When God gave him his positive institutions before the Fall, or whatsoever additions God should have made, had he persisted in that state; or when he appointed him after his Fall to testify his acknowledgments of him by sacrifices, there needed no command to him to make those acknowledgments by those outward ways prescribed to him, with the intention and prime affection of his spirit. This nature would instruct him in without revelation; for he could not possibly have any semblance of reason to think, that the offering of beasts, or the presenting the first fruits of the increase of the ground, as an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty over him, and his bounty to him, was sufficient without devoting to him that part wherein the image of his Creator consisted. He could not but discern by reflection upon his own being, that he was made *for* God as well as *by* God; for it is a natural principle, of which the apostle speaks, *Rom.* 11. 36, *For of him,* and *through him, and to him, are all things, &c.* that the whole, whereof he did consist, was due to God; and that his body, the dreggy and dusty part of his nature, was not fit to be brought alone before God, without that nobler principle, which he had by creation linked with it. Nothing in the whole law of nature, as it is informed of religion, was clearer next to the being of God, than this manner of worshipping God with the mind and spirit. And as the Gentiles never sunk so low into idolatry, as to think the images they worshipped were really their gods, but the representations or habitations of their gods; so they never deserted this principle in the notion of it, that God was to be honoured with the best they were, and the best they had: as they never denied the being of a God in the notion, though they did in the practice; so they never rejected this principle in notion, though they did in the inward observation of it. It was a maxim among them that God was *mens, animus,* mind and spirit, and therefore was to be honoured with the mind and spirit; that religion did not consist in the ceremonies of the body, but

the work of the soul; whence, the speech of one of them; * "Sacrifice to the gods not so much clothed with purple garments as a pure heart: and of another, † God regards not the multitude of the sacrifices, but the disposition of the sacrificer." It is not fit we should deny God the cream and flower, and give him the *flotten part and the stalks.* And with what reverence and intention of mind they thought their worship was to be performed, is evident by the priests crying out often, *hoc age.* Mind this, let your spirits be intent upon it.

This could not but result, 1. From the *knowledge of ourselves.* It is a natural principle, *God hath made us, and not we ourselves, Psal.* 100. 1, 2, Man knows himself to be a rational creature. As a creature he was to serve his Creator, and as a rational creature with the best part of that rational nature he derived from him. By the same act of reason that he knows himself to be a creature, he knows himself to have a Creator; that this Creator is more excellent than himself; and that honour is due from him to the Creator for framing him; and therefore this honour was to be offered to him by the most excellent part which was framed by him. Man cannot consider himself as a thinking, understanding being; but he must know that he must give God the honour of his thoughts, and worship him with those faculties whereby he thinks, wills, and acts. ‡ He must know his faculties were given him to act, and to act for the glory of that God who gave him his soul and the faculties of it; and he could not in reason think they must be only active in his own service, and the service of the creature, and idle and unprofitable in the service of his Creator. With the same powers of our soul whereby we contemplate God, we must also worship God. We cannot think of him but with our minds, nor love him but with our will; and we cannot worship him without the acts of thinking and loving, and therefore cannot worship him without the exercise of our inward faculties. How is it possible then

* Menander. Grot. de veritat Relig. lib. 4. § 12. † Jamblick.
‡ Amyrald. Mor. Tom. 1. page 309, 310.

for any man that knows his own nature, to think that extended hands, bended knees, and lifted eyes were sufficient acts of worship, without a quickened and active spirit?

2. From the *knowledge* of God. As there was a knowledge of God by nature, so the same nature dictated to man that God was to be glorified as God; the apostle implies the inference in the charge he brings against them for neglecting it, *Rom.* 1. 21. We should speak of God as he is, says one;* and the same reason would inform them that they were to act towards God as he is. The excellency of the object required a worship according to the dignity of his nature, which could not be answered but by the most serious inward affection, as well as outward decency; and a want of this cannot but be judged to be unbecoming the majesty of the Creator of the world, and the excellency of religion. No nation, no person, did ever assert, that the vilest part of man was enough for the most excellent being, as God is; that a bodily service could be a sufficient acknowledgment of the greatness of God, or a sufficient return for the bounty of God. † Man could not but know that he was to act in religion, conformably to the object of religion, and to the excellency of his own soul. The notion of a God was sufficient to fill the mind of man with admiration and reverence, and the first conclusion from it would be to honour God, and that he have all the affection placed on him, that so infinite and spiritual a Being deserved. The progress then would be, that this excellent Being was to be honoured with the motions of the understanding and will; with the purest and most spiritual powers in the nature of man; because he was a spiritual Being, and had nothing of matter mingled with him. Such a brutish imagination, to suppose that blood and fumes, beasts and incense could please a deity without a spiritual frame, cannot be supposed to befal any but those that had lost their reason in the rubbish of sense. Mere rational nature could never conclude that so excellent a spirit would be

* Bias. † Amirald ib.

put off with a mere animal service, and attendance of matter and body without spirit, when they themselves of an inferior nature would be loath to sit down contented with an outside service from those that belong to them; so that this instruction of our Saviour, that God is to be worshipped in spirit and truth, is conformable to the sentiments of nature, and drawn from the most undeniable principles of it. The excellency of God's nature, and the excellent constitution of human faculties, concur naturally to support this persuasion. This was as natural to be known by men, as the necessity of justice and temperance for the support of human societies and bodies. It is to be feared that if there be not among us such brutish apprehensions, there are such brutish dealings with God in our services against the light of nature; when we place all our worship of God in outward attendances and drooping countenances, with unbelieving frames and formal devotions; when prayer is muttered over in private slightly, as lessons learned by rote, not understanding what or to what they speak; not glorifying God in thought and spirit, with understanding and will.

Proposition 3. Spiritual worship therefore *was always required by God*, and *always offered to him* by one or other. Man had a perpetual obligation upon him to such a worship from the nature of God, and what is founded upon the nature of God is unvariable. This and that particular mode of worship may *wax old as a garment, and as a vesture may be folded up and changed*, as the expression is of the heavens, *Heb.* 1. 11, 12, but God endures for ever; his spirituality fails not, therefore the worship of him in spirit must run through all the ways and rites of worship. God must cease to be spirit, before any service but that which is spiritual, can be accepted by him. The light of nature is the light of God; the light of nature being unchangeable, what was dictated by that, was always and will always be required by God. The worship of God being perpetually due from the creature, the worshipping him as God is as perpetually his right. Though the outward expressions of this honour were different, one way in paradise (for worship was then due,

since a solemn time for that worship was appointed) another under the law, another under the gospel; the angels also worship God in heaven, and fall down before his throne; yet though they differ in rites, they agree in this necessary ingredient. All rites, though of a different shape, must be offered to him not as carcases, but animated with the affections of the soul. Abel's sacrifice had not been so excellent in God's esteem, without those gracious habits and affections working in his soul.* Faith works by love; his heart was on fire as well as his sacrifice. Cain rested upon his present, perhaps thought he had obliged God; he depended upon the outward ceremony, but sought not for the inward purity; it was an offering brought to the Lord;† he had the right object but not the right manner, *Gen.* 4. 7. *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?* And the command afterwards to *Abraham, walk before me, and be thou perfect*, was for direction in all our religious acts and walkings with God. A sincere act of the mind and will, looking above and beyond all symbols; extending the soul to a pitch far above the body, and seeing the day of Christ through the vail of the ceremonies, was required by God. And though Moses, by God's order, had instituted a multitude of carnal ordinances, sacrifices, washings, oblations of sensible things, and recommended to the people the diligent observation of those statutes by the allurements of promises, and denouncing of threatenings, as if there were nothing else to be regarded, and the true workings of grace were to be buried under a heap of ceremonies; yet sometimes he points them to the inward worship, and by the command of God, requires of them the *circumcision* of the *heart*, *Deut.* 10. 16, the turning to God with *all their heart, and all their soul*, *Deut.* 30. 10, whereby they might recollect, that it was the engagement of the heart, and the worship of the spirit that was most agreeable to God; and that he took not any pleasure in their observance of ceremonies, without true piety within, and the true purity of their thoughts.

* Heb. 11. 4. † Gen. 4. 5.

Proposition 4. It is therefore as much every man's duty to worship God *in spirit*, as *it is their duty to worship him.* Worship is so due to him as God, as that he that denies it, disowns his deity; and spiritual worship is so due, that he that waves it denies his spirituality. It is a debt of justice we owe to God to worship him, and it is as much a debt of justice to worship him according to his nature. Worship is nothing else but rendering to God the honour that is due to him; and therefore the right posture of our spirits in it, is as much or more due, than the material worship in the modes of his own prescribing; *that* is grounded both upon his nature and upon his command; *this* only upon his command; that is perpetually due, whereas the channel wherein outward worship runs may be dried up, and the river diverted another way. Ours must be that worship wherein the mind thinks of God, feels a sense of God, has the spirit consecrated to God, the heart glowing with affections to God. God is most visible in the frame of the soul, it is there his image shines; he hath given us a jewel as well as a case, and the jewel as well as the case we must return to him. The spirit is God's gift, and must *return to him*; *Eccl.* 12. 7; it must return to him in every service morally, as well as it must return to him at last physically. It is not fit we should serve our Maker only with that which is animal in us, and withhold from him that which constitutes us reasonable creatures; we must give him our bodies, but a *living sacrifice*, *Rom.* 12. 1. If the spirit be absent from God when the body is before him, we present a dead sacrifice; it is morally dead in the duty, though it be naturally alive in the posture and action. It is not an indifferent thing whether we worship God or not, nor is it an indifferent thing whether we worship him with our spirits or not: as the excellency of man's knowledge consists in knowing things as they are in truth; so the excellency of the will consists in willing things as they are in goodness. As it is the excellency of man to know God as God; so it is no less his excellency, as well as his duty, to honour God as God. As the obligation we have to the power of God

for our being, binds us to worship him; so the obligation we have to his bounty for fashioning us according to his own image, binds us to an exercise of that part wherein his image consists. God hath *made all things for himself, Prov.* 16. 4, that is, for the evidence of his own goodness and wisdom. We are therefore to render him a glory according to the excellency of his nature, discovered in the frame of our own. It is as much our sin not to glorify God as God, as not to attempt the glorifying of him at all. It is our sin not to worship God as God, as well as to omit the testifying any respect at all to him. As the divine nature is the object of worship, so the divine perfections are to be honoured in worship. We do not honour God if we honour him not as he is; we honour him not as a spirit, if we think him not worthy of the ardour and admiration of our spirits. If we think the devotions of the body are sufficient for him, we contract him into the condition of our own being; and not only deny him to be a spiritual nature, but dash out all those perfections which he could not be possessed of, were he not a spirit.

Proposition 5. The ceremonial law was abolished *to promote the spirituality* of Divine worship. That service was gross, carnal, calculated for an infant and sensitive church: it consisted in rudiments, the circumcision of the flesh, the blood and smoke of sacrifices, the steams of incense, observation of days, distinction of meats, corporeal purifications; every leaf of the law is clogged with some rite to be particularly observed by them; the spirituality of worship lay veiled under a thick cloud, that the people could not behold the glory of the gospel, which lay covered under those shadows, 2 *Cor.* 3. 13. *They could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:* They understood not the glory and spiritual intent of the law, and therefore came short of that spiritual frame in the worship of God, which was their duty. And therefore in opposition to this administration, the worship of God under the gospel is called by our Saviour in the text, *a worship in spirit;* more spiritual for the mat-

ter, more spiritual for the motives, and more spiritual for the manner and frames of worship.

1. This legal service is called *flesh* in scripture, in opposition to the gospel, which is called *spirit*. The ordinances of the law, though of divine institution, are dignified by the apostle with no better title than *carnal ordinances*, and *a carnal command*, *Heb.* 9. 10. But the gospel is called *Heb.* 7. 16, *the ministration of the spirit*, as being attended with a special and spiritual efficacy on the minds of men, 2 *Cor.* 3. 8. And when the degenerate Galatians, after having tasted of the pure streams of the gospel, turned about to drink of the thicker streams of the law, the apostle tells them, that they begun *in the spirit* and would not be *made perfect in the flesh*, *Gal.* 3. 3. They would leave the righteousness of faith for a justification by works. The moral law, which is in its own nature *spiritual*, in regard of the abuse of it, in expectation of justification by the outward works of it, is called *flesh :* much more may the ceremonial administration, which was never intended to run parallel with the moral, nor had any foundation in nature as the other had. That whole economy consisted in sensible and material things; it is called *Rom.* 7. 6, *the letter*, and *the oldness of the letter ;* as letters which are but empty sounds of themselves, but put together and formed into words, signify something to the mind of the hearer or reader: an old letter, a thing of no efficacy upon the spirit, but as a law written upon paper. The gospel hath an efficacious spirit attending it, strongly working upon the mind and will; and moulding the soul into a spiritual frame for God, according to the doctrine of the gospel; the one is old and decays, the other is new and increaseth daily. And as the law itself is called *flesh*, so those who observe it and rest in it are called *Israel after the flesh*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 18. And the evangelical worshipper is called a *Jew after the spirit*, *Rom.* 2. 29. They were Israel after the flesh as born of Jacob, not Israel after the spirit as born of God; and therefore the apostle calls them Israel and not Israel, *Rom.* 9. 6. Israel after a carnal birth, not Israel after a

spiritual: Israel in the circumcision of the flesh, not Israel by a regeneration of the heart.

2. The legal ceremonies were *not a fit means* to bring the heart into a spiritual frame. They had a spiritual intent; the *rock* and *manna* prefigured the salvation and spiritual nourishment by the Redeemer, 1 *Cor.* 10. 3, 4. The sacrifices were to point them to the justice of God in the punishment of sin, and the mercy of God in substituting them in their steads, as types of the Redeemer and the ransom by his blood. The circumcision of the flesh was to instruct them in the circumcision of the heart: they were flesh in regard of their matter, weakness and cloudiness: spiritual in regard of their intent and signification: they did instruct, but not efficaciously work strong spiritual affections in the soul of the worshipper. They were weak and *beggarly elements*, *Gal.* 4. 9, had neither wealth to enrich, nor strength to nourish the soul: they could not *perfect* the comers to them, or put them into a frame agreeable to the nature of God, *Heb.* 10. 1. *Heb.* 9. 9, nor *purge the conscience from those dead* and dull dispositions which were by nature in them, *Heb.* 9. 15. Being carnal, they could not have an efficacy to purify the conscience of the offerer, and work spiritual effects. Had they continued without the exhibition of Christ, they could never have wrought any change in us or purchased any favour for us.* At the best they were but shadows, and came inexpressibly short of the efficacy of that person and state whose shadows they were. The shadow of a man is too weak to perform what the man himself can do, because it wants the life, spirit, and activity of the substance. The whole pomp and scene was suited more to the sensitive than the intellectual nature; and like pictures pleased the fancy of children, rather than improved their reason. The Jewish state, was a state of *childhood*, *Gal.* 5. 2. The law was a schoolmaster, *Gal.* 4. 24, fitted for their weak and childish capacity, and would no more spiritualize the heart, than the first lesson of school can enable the mind, and make it fit for affairs of state:

* Burge's vind. pa. 256.

and because they could not better the spirit, they were instituted only for a time, as elements delivered to an infant age, which naturally lives a life of sense, rather than a life of reason. It was also a servile state, which doth rather debase than elevate the mind; rather carnalize than spiritualize the heart. Besides, it is a sense of mercy that both melts and elevates the heart into a spiritual frame, *There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared. Psa.* 130. 4. But they had in that state but some glimmerings of mercy in the daily sacrificial intimations of justice; there was no sacrifice for some sins, but a cutting off without the least hint of pardon; and in the yearly remembrance of sin, there was as much to shiver them with fear, as to possess them with hopes. And such a state which always held them under the conscience of sin, could not produce a free spirit, which was necessary for a worship of God according to his nature.

3. In their use they rather *hindered* than furthered a spiritual worship. In their own nature they did not tend to the obstructing a spiritual worship; for then they had been contrary to the nature of religion, and the end of God who appointed them. Nor did God cover the evangelical doctrine under the clouds of the legal administration, to hinder the people of Israel from perceiving it; but because they were not yet able to bear the splendour of it, had it been clearly set before them. The shining of the face of Moses was too dazzling for their weak eyes, and therefore the necessity of a *veil*, not for the things themselves, but the *weakness of their eyes.* 2 *Cor.* 3. 13. The carnal affections of that people sunk down into the things themselves; rested in the outward pomp, and pierced not through the veil to the spiritual intent of them. And by the use of them without rational conceptions they besotted their minds and became senseless of those spiritual motions required of them. Hence came all their expectations of a carnal Messiah; the veil of ceremonies was so thick, and the film upon their eyes so condensed, that they could not look through the veil to the spirit of Christ. They beheld not the heavenly Canaan for the beauty of the earthly, nor

minded the regeneration of the spirit, while they rested upon the purifications of the flesh; the prevalence of sense and sensitive affections diverted their minds from enquiring into the intent of them. Sense and matter are often clogs to the mind, and sensible objects are the same often to spiritual motions. Our souls are never more raised, than when they are abstracted from the entanglements of them. A pompous worship made up of many sensible subjects, weakens the spirituality of religion; those that are most zealous for outward, are usually most cold and indifferent in inward observances; and those that overdo in carnal modes, usually fall short in spiritual affections.

This was the *Jewish* state. * The nature of the ceremonies being pompous and earthly by their show and beauty, meeting with their weakness and childish affections, filled their eyes with an outward lustre; allured their minds, and detained them from seeking things higher and more spiritual: the kernel of those rites lay concealed in a thick shell, the spiritual glory was little seen, and the spiritual sweetness little tasted. Unless the scripture be diligently searched, it seems to transfer the worship of God from true faith and the spiritual motions of the heart, and stake it down to outward observances, and the *opus operatum.* Besides, the voice of the law did only declare sacrifices, and invited the worshipper to them, with a promise of the atonement of sin, turning away the wrath of God. It never plainly acquainted them, that those things were types and shadows of something future, that they were only outward purifications of the flesh; it never plainly told them at the time of appointing them, that those sacrifices could not abolish sin, and reconcile them to God. Indeed we see more of them since their abolition, in that one epistle to the Hebrews, than can be discerned in the five books of Moses: besides man naturally affects a carnal life, and therefore affects a carnal worship; he designs the gratifying his sense, and would have a religion of the same

* Illyric. de velam. Mosis pa. 221.

nature. Most men have no mind to busy their reason above the things of sense, and are naturally unwilling to raise them up to those things which are allied to the spiritual nature of God; and therefore the more spiritual any ordinance is, the more averse is the heart of man to it. There is a *simplicity* of the gospel from which our minds are easily corrupted by things that please the sense, as Eve was beguiled in Paradise. 2 *Cor.* 11. 3. From this principle hath sprung all the idolatry in the world. The Jews knew they had a God who had delivered them, but they would have a sensible God to go before them. *Exod.* 32. 1. And Papacy at this day, is a witness of the truth of this natural corruption.

4. Upon these accounts therefore *God never testified himself well pleased with that kind of worship.* He was not displeased with them as they were his own institution, and are ordained for the representing, though in an obscure manner, the glorious things of the gospel; nor was he offended with those people's observance of them, for since he had commanded them, it was their duty to perform them, and their sin to neglect them. But he was displeased with them as they were practised by them, with souls as morally carnal in the practices, as the ceremonies were materially carnal in their substance. It was not their disobedience to observe them; but it was a disobedience and a contempt of the end of the institution to rest upon them; to be warm in them, and cold in morals: they pleased themselves with the shell, and sought not for the kernel. They joined not with them the internal worship of God, fear of him, with faith in the promised seed, which lay vailed under those coverings, *Hos* 6. 6, *I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt offerings.* And therefore he seems sometimes weary of his own institutions, and calls them not his own, but *their* sacrifices, *their* feasts, *Isa.* 1. 11, 14. They were *his* by appointment, *theirs* by abuse. The institution was from his goodness and condescension, therefore *his*; the corruption of them was from the vice of their nature; therefore *theirs.* He often blamed them for their carnality in them; shewed

his dislike of placing all their religion in them; gives the sacrificers upon that account, no better title, than that of the princes of Sodom and Gomorrah, *Isa.* 1. 10; and compares the sacrifices themselves to the *cutting off a dog's neck, swine's blood,* and the *murder of a man. Isa.* 66. 3, And indeed God never valued them, or expressed any delight in them; he despised the *feasts* of the wicked, *Amos* 5. 21, and had no esteem for the material offerings of the godly, *Psal.* 50. 13, *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* Which he speaks to his saints and people, before he comes to reprove the wicked; ver. 16. *But to the wicked, God said,* &c. so slightly he esteemed them, that he seems to disown them to be any part of his command, when he brought his people out of the land of Egypt, *Jer.* 7. 21. *I spake not to your fathers, nor commanded them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices.* He did not value nor regard them, in comparison of that inward frame which he had required by the moral law; that being given before the law of ceremonies, obliged them in the first place, to an observance of those precepts. They seemed to be below the nature of God, and could not of themselves please him. None could in reason persuade themselves, that the death of a beast, was a proportionable offering for the sin of a man, or ever was intended for the expiation of transgression. In the same rank are all our bodily services under the gospel: A loud voice without spirit; bended bulrushes without inward affections, are no more delightful to God, than the sacrifices of animals; it is but a change of one brute for another of a higher species; a mere brute, for that part of man which hath an agreement with brutes. Such a service is a mere animal service, and not spiritual.

5. And therefore *God never intended that sort of worship to be durable,* and had often mentioned the change of it for one more spiritual. It was not good or evil in itself; whatsoever goodness it had, was solely derived by institution; and therefore it was mutable: it had no conformity with the spiritual nature of God, who was to be worshipped; nor with the rational nature of man who

was to worship: and therefore he often speaks of taking away the new-moons, and feasts, and sacrifices, and all the ceremonial worship, as things he took no pleasure in; to have a worship more suited to his excellent nature; but he never speaks of removing the gospel administration, and the worship prescribed there, as being more agreeable to the nature and perfections of God, and displaying them more illustriously to the world. The apostle tells us, it was *to be disannulled because of its weakness, Heb.* 7. 18. A determinate time was fixed for its duration, till the accomplishment of the truth figured under that state of subjection to *tutors and governors, Gal.* 4. 2. Some of the modes of that worship being only typical, must naturally expire and be insignificant in their use, upon the finishing of that by the Redeemer, which they prefigured; and other parts of it, though God suffered them so long because of the weakness of the worshipper, yet because it became not God to be always worshipped in that manner, he would reject them, and introduce another more spiritual and elevated. *Incense and a pure offering* should be offered every where unto his name,* *Mal.* 1. 11.

He often told them he would make a *new covenant* by the Messiah, and the old should be rejected; that the *former things should not be remembered, and the things of old no more considered,* when he should do *a new thing in the earth, Isa.* 43. 18, 19. Even the ark of the covenant, the symbol of his presence, and the glory of the Lord in that nation, should not any more be remembered and visited, *Jer.* 3. 16. That the temple and sacrifices should be rejected, and others established; that the order of the Aaronical priesthood should be abolished, and that of Melchisedeck set up in the stead of it in the person of the Messiah to endure for ever, *Psal.* 110. That Jerusalem should be changed; a new heaven and earth created; a worship more conformable to heaven, more advantageous to earth. God had proceeded in the removal of some part of it, before the time of taking down the whole

* Pascal. Pen. 142.

furniture of this house: the pot of manna was lost; *Urim* and *Thummim* ceased; the glory of the temple was diminished; and the ignorant people wept at the sight of the one, without raising their faith and hope in the consideration of the other, which was promised to be filled with a spiritual glory. And as soon as ever the gospel was spread in the world, God thundered out his judgments upon that place in which he had fixed all those legal observances, so that the Jews in the letter and flesh, could never practice the main part of their worship, since they were expelled from that place where it was only to be celebrated. It is one thousand six hundred years since they have been deprived of their *Altar*, which was the foundation of all the Levitical worship, and have wandered in the world *without a sacrifice, a prince, or priest, an ephod or teraphim, Hos.* 3. 4. And God fully put an end to it in the command he gave to the apostles, and in them to us, in the presence of Moses and Elias, *Mat.* 17. 5, *Behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;* and at the death of our Saviour, testified it to that whole nation and the world, by rending in twain the vail of the temple. The whole frame of that service, which was carnal, and by reason of the corruption of man, weakened is nulled; and a spiritual worship is made known to the world, that we might now serve God in a more spiritual manner, and with more spiritual frames.

Proposition 6. The service and worship the gospel *settles, is spiritual, and the performance of it more spiritual.* Spirituality is the genius of the gospel, as carnality was of the law; the gospel is therefore called *Spirit.* We are abstracted from the employments of sense, and brought nearer to a heavenly state. The Jews had angel's bread poured upon them; we have angel's service prescribed to us; the praises of God; communion with God in spirit, through his son Jesus Christ, and stronger foundations for spiritual affections. It is called a *reasonable service. Rom.* 12. 1, suited to a rational nature, though it finds no friendship from the corruption of reason. It prescribes a service fit for the reasonable facul-

ties of the soul, and advances them while it employs them. The word *reasonable*, may be translated, *word service*, * as well as reasonable service; an evangelical service in opposition to a law service. All evangelical service is reasonable, and all truly reasonable service is evangelical. The *matter* of the worship is spiritual; it consists in love to God, faith in God, recourse to his goodness, meditation on him, and communion with him. It lays aside the ceremonial, spiritualizeth the moral law. The commands that concerned our duty to God, as well as those that concerned our duty to our neighbour, were reduced by Christ to the spiritual intention.

The *motives* are spiritual; it is a state of more *grace* as well as of more *truth*, *John* 1. 17, supported by spiritual promises, beaming out in spiritual privileges; heaven comes down in it to earth, to spiritualize earth for heaven.

The *manner* of worship is more spiritual; here are higher flights of the soul, stronger ardours of affections, sincerer aims at his glory; mists are removed from our minds, clogs from the soul, there is more of love than fear; faith in Christ kindles the affections and works by them.

The *assistances* to spiritual worship are greater. The spirit doth not drop, but is plentifully poured out. It doth not light sometimes upon, but dwells in the heart. Christ suited the gospel to a spiritual heart, and the spirit changeth a carnal heart to make it fit for a spiritual gospel. He blows upon the garden and causes the spices to flow forth; and often makes the soul in worship like the chariots of Aminadab. Our blessed Lord and Saviour by his death discovered to us the nature of God; and after his ascension sent his Spirit to fit us for the worship of God, and converse with him.

One spiritual evangelical believing breath is more delightful to God, than millions of altars made up of the richest pearls, and smoking with the costliest oblations, because it is spiritual; and a mite of spirit is of more

* V. Hammond in loc.

worth than the greatest weight of flesh. One holy angel is more excellent than a whole world of mere bodies.

Proposition. 7. Yet the worship of God with our bodies is not to be *rejected upon the account that God requires a spiritual worship.* Though we must perform the weightier duties of the law, yet we are not to omit and leave undone the lighter precepts. Since both the *Magnalia* and *minutula legis,* the greater and the lesser duties of the law, have the stamp of divine authority upon them. As God under the ceremonial law did not command the worship of the body, and the observation of outward rites, without the engagement of the spirit; so neither doth he command that of the spirit, without the peculiar attendance of the body. The Schwelkfendians denied bodily worship. And the indecent postures of many in public attendance, intimate no great care either of composing their bodies or spirits. A morally discomposed body intimates a tainted heart. Our *bodies* as well as our *spirits* are to be presented to God, *Rom.* 12. 1. Our bodies, instead of the sacrifices of beasts, as in the Judaical institutions; the body for the whole man; a living sacrifice, not to be slain, as the beasts were; but living a new life, in a holy posture, with crucified affections. This is the inference the apostle makes of the privileges of justification, adoption, coheirship with Christ, privileges conferred upon the person and not upon a part of man.

1. *Bodily worship* is due to God. He hath a right to adoration by our bodies as they are his by creation; his right is not diminished but increased by the blessing of redemption, 1 *Cor.* 6. 20, *For you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and your spirits, which are God's.* The body as well as the spirit is redeemed, since our Saviour suffered crucifixion in his body, as well as agonies in his soul. Body is not taken here for the whole man, as it may be in *Rom.* 12, but for the material part of our nature, it being distinguished from the spirit. If we are to render to God an obedience with our bodies, we are to render him such acts of worship with our bodies, as they are capable of. As God is *the Father of spirits,* so he is the *God of all flesh.* Therefore the flesh he hath

framed of the earth, as well as the noble portion he hath breathed into us, cannot be denied him without palpable injustice. The service of the body we must not deny to God, unless we would deny him to be the author of it, and the exercise of his providential care about it. The mercies of God are renewed every day upon our bodies as well as our souls; and therefore they ought to express a fealty to God for his bounty every day; * "both are from God, both should be for God. Man consists of body and soul, the service of man is the service of both. The body is to be sanctified as well as the soul, and therefore to be offered to God as well as the soul. Both are to be glorified, both are to glorify. As our Saviour's divinity was manifested in his body, so should our spirituality in our's. To give God the service of the body and not of the soul, is hypocrisy; to give God the service of the spirit and not of the body is sacrilege; to give him neither, atheism." If the only part of man that is visible were exempted from the service of God, there could be no visible testimonies of piety given upon any occasion; since the whole man is God's creature, he ought to pay homage with the whole, and not with a moiety of himself.

2. Worship in societies is due to God, but this *cannot be without some bodily expressions.* The law of nature doth as much direct men to combine together in public societies for the acknowledgment of God, as in civil communities for self-preservation and order. And the notice of a society for religion is more ancient than the mention of civil associations for political government. *Gen.* 4. 26, *Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord*, viz. in the time of Seth. No question but Adam had worshipped God before as well as Abel, and a family religion had been preserved; but as mankind increased in distinct families, they knit together in companies to solemnize the worship of God. † Hence, as some think, those that incorporated together for such ends, were called the *Sons of God;*

* Sherman's Greek in the Temple, p. 61, 62.

† Stillingfleet's Irenicum, cap. 1. § 1. p. 23.

sons by profession, though not sons by adoption; as those of Corinth were saints by profession, though in such a corrupted church they could not be all so by regeneration; yet saints, as being of a Christian society, and calling upon the name of Christ, that is, worshipping God in Christ, though they might not be all saints in spirit and practice. So Cain and Abel met together to worship, *Gen.* 4. 3, *At the end of the days*, at a set time. God settled a public worship among the Jews, instituted synagogues for their convening together, whence called the *synagogues of God.** The sabbath was instituted to acknowledge God as a common benefactor. Public worship keeps up the memorials of God in a world prone to atheism, and a sense of God in a heart prone to forgetfulness. The angels sung in company, not singly at the birth of Christ,† and praised God not only with a simple elevation of their spiritual nature, but audibly by voice in the air. Affections are more lively, spirits more raised in public than private; God will honour his own ordinance. Fire increaseth by laying together many coals on one place; so is devotion inflamed by the union of many hearts, and by a joint presence; nor can the approach of the last day of judgment, or particular judgments upon a nation, give a writ of ease from such assemblies. *Heb.* 10. 25. *Not forsaking the assembling ourselves together, but so much more as you see the day approaching.* Whether this be understood of the day of judgment, or the day of the Jewish destruction and the Christian persecution, the apostle uses it as an argument to quicken them to the observance, not to encourage them to a neglect. Since, therefore, natural light informs us, and divine institution commands us, publicly to acknowledge ourselves the servants of God, it implies the service of the body. Such acknowledgments cannot be without visible testimonies, and outward exercises of devotion, as well as inward affections. This promotes God's honour, checks others' profaneness, allures men to the same expressions of duty. And though there may be hypocrisy, and an outward garb without an inward frame, yet bet-

* Psa. 47. 8. † Luke 2. 13.

ter a part of worship than none at all; better acknowledge God's right in one than disown it in both.

3. *Jesus Christ, the most spiritual worshipper, worshipped God with his body.* He prayed orally, and kneeled, *Father if it be thy will, &c. Luke* 22. 41, 42. He blessed with his mouth, *Father I thank thee, Mat.* 11. 26. He lifted up his eyes as well as elevated his spirit, when he praised his Father for mercy received, or begged for the blessings his disciples wanted. *John* 11. 41, and 12. 1. The strength of the spirit must have vent at the outward members. The holy men of God have employed the body in significant expressions of worship: Abraham in falling on his face, Paul in kneeling, employing their tongues, lifting up their hands. Though Jacob was bed-rid, yet he would not worship God without some devout expression of reverence; it is in one place *leaning upon his staff, Heb.* 11. 21, in another *bowing himself upon his bed's head, Gen.* 47. 31. The reason of the diversity is in the Hebrew word, which without vowels may be read *Mittah* a bed, or *Matteh* a staff; howsoever, both signify a testimony of adoration by a reverent gesture of the body. Indeed, in angels and separated souls, a worship is performed purely by the spirit; but while the soul is in conjunction with the body, it can hardly perform a serious act of worship without some influence upon the outward man, and reverential composure of the body. Fire cannot be in the clothes, but it will be felt by the members; nor flames be pent up in the soul without bursting out in the body: the heart can no more restrain itself from breaking out, than Joseph could inclose his affections, without expressing them in tears to his brethren. *Gen.* 45. 1, 2. *We believe, and therefore speak,* 2 *Cor.* 4. 13. To conclude; God hath appointed some parts of worship which cannot be performed without the body, as sacraments; we have need of them because we are not wholly spiritual and incorporeal creatures. But the religion, which consists in externals only, is not for an intellectual nature: a worship purely intellectual is too sublime for a nature allied to sense and depending much upon it: the christian mode of worship is proportioned to both; it

makes the sense to assist the mind, and elevates the spirit above the sense. Bodily worship helps the spiritual: the members of the body reflect back upon the heart, the voice bars distractions, the tongue sets the heart on fire in good as well as in evil. It is as much against the light of nature to serve God without external significations, as to serve him without the intention of the mind. As the invisible God declares himself to men by visible signs, so should we declare our invisible frames by visible expressions. God hath given us a soul and body in conjunction, and we are to serve him in the same manner he hath framed us.

PART IV.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF WORSHIP.

Worship an act of the understanding—From a spiritual nature—By the assistance of the Spirit—The sincerity of it—All the sanctified passions of the heart united in the performance of it—Performed with spiritual activity—Spiritual habits—Requires the exercise of faith—Of love—A sense of our weakness and dependence—Spiritual desires—Thankfulness—Spiritual worship to be performed with delight—Joy—Humility—Holiness—With spiritual ends---And in the name of Christ.

THE second thing I am to shew, is, *what* spiritual worship is. In general, the whole spirit is to be employed. The name of God is not sanctified but by the engagement of our souls. Worship is an act of the *understanding*, applying itself to the knowledge of the excellency of God, and actual thoughts of his majesty,

recognising him as the supreme Lord and Governor of the world, which is natural knowledge; beholding the glory of his attributes in the Redeemer, which is evangelical knowledge; this is the sole act of the spirit of man. The same reason is for all our worship as for our thanksgiving; this must be done with understanding, *Psal.* 47. 7, *Sing ye praise with understanding;* with a knowledge and sense of his greatness, goodness, and wisdom. It is also an act of the *will*, whereby the soul adores and reverenceth his majesty, is delighted with his amiableness, embraces his goodness, enters itself into an intimate communion with this most lovely object, and fixes all his affections upon him.

We must worship God *understandingly;* it is not else a reasonable service. The nature of God and the law of God abhor a blind offering; we must worship him heartily, else we offer him a dead sacrifice: a reasonable service is that wherein the mind truly acts something with God. All spiritual acts must be acts of reason, otherwise they are not human acts, because they want that principle which is constitutive of man, and distinguishes him from other creatures. Acts done only by sense are the acts of a brute; acts done by reason are the acts of a man; that which is only an act of sense, cannot be an act of religion. The sense without the conduct of reason is not the subject of religious acts, for then beasts were capable of religion as well as men. There cannot be religion where there is not reason; and there cannot be the exercise of religion, where there is not an exercise of the rational faculties. Nothing can be a christian act, that is not a human act; besides, all worship must be for some end; the worship of God must be for God; it is by the exercise of our rational faculties, that we only can intend an end. An ignorant and carnal worship is a brutish worship, particularly

1. Spiritual worship is a worship from *a spiritual nature.* Not only physically spiritual, so our souls are in their frame; but morally spiritual, by a renewing principle. The heart must be first cast into the mould of the Gospel, before it can perform the worship required by the

gospel. Adam, in Paradise, might perform a spiritual worship; but Adam fallen from his rectitude, could not. We being heirs of his nature, are heirs of his impotence: restoration to a spiritual life must precede any act of spiritual worship. As no work can be good, so no worship can be spiritual, till we are created in Christ. Christ is our life. As no natural action can be performed without life in the root or heart, so there can be no spiritual act without Christ in the soul; our being in Christ is as necessary to every spiritual act, as the union of soul and body is necessary to natural action. Nothing can exceed the limits of its nature; for then it should exceed itself in acting, and do that which it hath no principle to do. A beast cannot act like a man, without partaking of the nature of a man; nor a man act like an angel, without partaking of the angelical nature. How can we perform spiritual acts without a spiritual principle? Whatsoever worship proceeds from the corrupted nature, cannot deserve the title of spiritual worship, because it springs not from a spiritual habit. Poison is the fruit of a viper's nature, *Mat.* 12. 34, *Oh, generation of vipers, how can you being evil speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.* As the root is, so is the fruit. If the soul be habitually carnal, the worship cannot be actually spiritual: there may be an intention of spirit, but there is no spiritual principle as the root of that intention. A heart may be sensibly united with a duty, when it is not spiritually united with Christ in it. Carnal motives may fix the mind in an act of worship, as the sense of pressing affliction may enlarge a man's mind in prayer. Whatsoever is agreeable to the nature of God, must have the stamp of the grace of Christ in performance, as well as of his mediation in the acceptance of it. The apostle *lived not*, but *Christ lived in him;* the soul worships not, but Christ in him: not that Christ performs the act of worship; but enables us spiritually to worship, after he enables us spiritually to live. As God counts not any soul living but in Christ, so he counts not any spiritual worshipper but in Christ. The goodness and fatness of the fruit comes from the fatness of the

olive wherein we are engrafted: we must find healing in Christ's wings, before God can find spirituality in our services. All worship issuing from a dead nature, is but a dead service; a living action cannot be performed, without being knit to a living root.

2. Spiritual worship is done by the *influence*, and with the *assistance*, of the Spirit of God. A heart may be spiritual when a particular act of worship is not so. The spirit may dwell in the heart, when he may suspend his influence on the act. Our worship is then spiritual when the fire that kindles our affections comes from heaven, as that fire upon the altar wherewith the sacrifices were consumed. God tastes a sweetness in no service, but as it is dressed up by the hand of the Mediator, and hath the air of his own spirit in it; they are but natural acts, without a supernatural assistance. Without an actual influence, we cannot act from spiritual motives, nor for spiritual ends, nor in a spiritual manner. We cannot mortify a lust without the spirit, nor quicken a service without the spirit. Whatsoever corruption is killed, is slain by his power; whatsoever duty is spiritualized, is refined by his breath. He *quickens our dead bodies* in our resurrection; he renews our dead souls in our regeneration; he quickens our carnal services in our adorations. The choicest acts of worship are but infirmities, without his auxiliary help, *Rom.* 8. 26. We are logs, unable to move ourselves, till he raise our faculties to a pitch agreeable to God; puts his hand to the duty, and lifts that up and us with it. Never any great act was performed by the apostles, but they are said to be filled with the Holy Ghost. The acts of worship are said to be in the spirit, *supplication in the spirit*, *Eph.* 6. 18; not only with the strength and affection of our spirits, but with the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost, *Jude* 20. The Holy Ghost exciting us; impelling us, and firing our souls by his divine flame; raising up the affections, and making the soul cry, with holy importunity, *Abba*, *Father*. To render our worship spiritual, we should, before every engagement in it, implore the presence of the Spirit, without which we are not able to send forth one

spiritual desire; like a ship without a gale we make no spiritual progress, and our worship is no better than carnal. How doth the spouse solicit the spirit, *Cant.* 4. 1, *awake, oh north-wind, and come thou south-wind, &c.*

3. Spiritual worship is done with *sincerity;* when the heart stands right to God, and the soul performs what it pretends to perform: When we serve God with our spirits, as the Apostle, *Rom.* 1. 9, *God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son:* This is not meant of the Holy Ghost; for the apostle would never have called the spirit of God, his own spirit; but with *my spirit*, that is a sincere frame of heart. Our worship is carnal when we are busied about external rites, without an inward compliance of soul. God demands the heart, *Pro.* 23. 26, *My Son give me thy heart*; not give me thy tongue, or thy lips, or thy hands; these may be given without the heart, but the heart can never be bestowed without these as its attendants. A heap of services can be no more welcome to God, without our spirits, than all Jacob's sons could be to Joseph, without the Benjamin he desired to see. God is not taken with the cabinet, but the jewel: he first respected Abel's faith and sincerity, and then his sacrifice; he disregarded Cain's infidelity and hypocrisy, and then his offering. * "For this cause he rejected the offerings of the Jews, the prayers of the Pharisees, and the alms of Ananias and Sapphira, because their hearts and their duties were at a distance from one another. In all spiritual sacrifices, our spirits are God's portion. Under the law, the reins were to be consumed by the fire on the altar, because the secret intentions of the heart were signified by them, *Psal.* 7. 9. *The Lord trieth the heart and the reins.* It was an ill Omen among the heathen, if a victim wanted a heart. The widow's mites, with her heart in them, were more esteemed than the richer offerings without it." It is not the quantity of service, but the heart in it, that is of

* Moulin. Sermons, Decad. 4. Ser. 4. p. 80.

account with this infinite Spirit. All that was to be brought for the framing of the tabernacle, was to be offered *willingly with the heart*, *Exod.* 25. 7. The more of will, the more of spirituality and acceptableness to God, *Psal.* 119. 108, *Accept the free-will-offering of my lips.* Sincerity is the salt which seasons every sacrifice. The heart in the body is the spring of all vital actions; and a spiritual soul is the spring of all spiritual actions. How can we imagine God can delight in the mere service of the body, any more than we can delight in converse with a carcase.

Without the heart there is no worship; it is merely acting a part. A hypocrite, in the notion of the word, is a stage-player. We may as well say a man may believe with his body, as worship God only with his body. Faith is a great ingredient in worship; and it is with the heart man believes unto righteousness, *Rom.* 10. 10. We may be truly said to worship God, though we want perfection; but we cannot be said to worship him, if we want sincerity. A statue upon a tomb, with eyes and hands lifted up, offers as good and true a service; it wants only a voice, the gestures and postures are the same; nay, the service is better, for it is not mockery; it represents all it can be framed to: but to worship without our spirits is presenting to God a picture, an echo, voice, and nothing else; a compliment; a compassing him about with lies. Without the heart, the tongue is a liar, and the greatest zeal is dissembling with him, *Hos.* 11. 12. To present the spirit, is to present God that which can never naturally die; to present only the body, is to present that which is every day crumbling to dust. To offer him a thing unworthy the majesty of God, a fixed eye and elevated hands, with a sleepy heart and earthly soul, are pitiful things for an ever blessed and glorious Spirit: nay, it is so far from being spiritual, that it is blasphemy. To pretend to be a *Jew outwardly*, without being so *inwardly*, is in the judgment of Christ to blaspheme, *Revel.* 2. 9. Such a one is not a spiritual worshipper, but a blaspheming devil in Samuel's mantle.

4. Spiritual worship is performed with a *united* heart. The heart is not only now and then with God but united to fear or worship his name, *Psal.* 86. 11. A spiritual duty must have the assistance of the spirit, and the thoughts fixed upon the spiritual object: the union of all the parts of the heart together with the body, is the life of the body; and the moral union of our hearts, is the life of duty. A wandering divided heart makes not God his treasure; he slights the worship, and therein affronts the object of it. All our thoughts ought to be delighted with God, and bound up in him. But when we start from him to gaze after every feather, and run after every bubble; we disown a full and affecting excellency, and a satisfying sweetness in him. When our thoughts run from God, it is a testimony we have no spiritual affection to God; affection would stake down the thoughts to the object affected: it is but a mouth love, as the prophet phrases it, *Ezek.* 33. 31, but their hearts go *after their covetousness.* Covetous objects pipe, and the heart danceth after them; and the thoughts of God are shifted off, to receive a multitude of other imaginations: the heart and the service staid a while together, and then took leave of one another. The psalmist still found his heart with God when he awaked; still with God in spiritual affections, and fixed meditations. A carnal heart is never with God, either in or out of worship: if God should knock at the heart in any duty, it would be found not at home, but straying abroad. Our worship is spiritual, when the door of the heart is shut against all intruders, as our Saviour commands in closet duties, *Mat.* 6. 6. It was not his meaning to command the shutting the closet door, and leave the heart door open for every thought that would haunt us. Worldly affections are to be laid aside, if we would have our worship spiritual. This was meant by the Jewish custom of wiping or washing off the dust of their feet before their entrance into the temple; and of not bringing money in their girdles. To be spiritual in worship, is to have our souls gathered and bound up wholly in themselves, and offered to God. Our loins must be girt, as the fashion was in the eastern

countries, where they wore long garments, that they might not obstruct them in their travel. Our faculties must not hang loose about us. He is a carnal worshipper that gives God but a piece of his heart, as well as he that denies him the whole of it; that hath some thoughts upon God in worship, and as many willingly upon the world. David sought God with *his whole heart;* with his intire frame, *Psal.* 119. 10. He brought not half his heart, and left the other in the possession of another master. It was a good lesson Pythagoras gave his scholars, "Not to make the observance of God a work by the bye." If those guests be invited, or entertained kindly, or if they come unexpected, the spirituality of that worship is lost; but if they be resisted by us, and our grief, rather than our pleasure; although they divert our spiritual intention from the work in hand, they hinder not God's acceptance of it as spiritual; because they are not the acts of our will, but offences to our wills.

5. Spiritual worship is performed with a *spiritual activity* and sense of God. With an understanding to meditate on his excellency; and a will to embrace him in all his characters and fulness. If we understand the amiableness of God, our affections will be delighted; if we understand the immensity of his goodness, our spirits will be enlarged. We are to act with the highest intention, suitable to the greatness of that God with whom we have to do, *Psal.* 150. 2. Not that we can worship him equally, but in some proportion, the frame of the heart is to be suited to the excellency of the object: our spiritual strength is to be put out to the utmost, as creatures that act naturally do. The sun shines, and the fire burns to the utmost of their natural power. This is so necessary, that David prays for it, before he enters upon acts of adoration, *Psal.* 80. 18, *Quicken us, that we may call upon thy name:* As he was loath to have a drowsy faculty, he was loath to have a drowsy instrument, and would willingly have them as lively as himself, *Psal.* 57. 8, *Awake up my glory; awake psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early.* How would this divine soul raise himself up to God, and be turned into nothing but a holy flame? A

Nabals heart, one as cold and as hard as a stone, cannot offer up a spiritual service.

Whatsoever is enjoined us as our duty, ought to be performed with the greatest intenseness of our spirit. As it is our duty to pray, so it is our duty to pray with the most fervent importunity. It is our duty to love God, but with the purest and most sublime affections: every command of God requires the whole strength of the creature to be employed in it. That love to God, wherein all our duty to God is summed up, is to be with all our strength, with all our might, &c. * Though in the covenant of grace he hath mitigated the severity of the law, and requires not from us such an elevation of our affections as was possible in the state of innocence, yet God requires of us the utmost moral industry to raise our affections to a pitch, at least equal to what they are in other things. What strength of affection we naturally have, ought to be as much and more excited in acts of worship than upon other occasions, and our ordinary works. As there was an inactivity of soul in worship and a quickness to sin, when sin had the dominion; so when the soul is spiritualized, the temper is changed; there is an inactivity to sin and an ardour in duty. The more the soul is *dead to sin* the more it is *alive to God;* and the more lively too in all that concerns God and his honour. For grace being a new strength added to our natural, determines the affections to new objects, and excites them to a greater vigour. And as the hatred of sin is more sharp, the love to every thing that destroys the dominion of it, is more strong; and acts of worship may be reckoned as the chiefest batteries against the power of this inbred enemy. When the spirit is in the soul, like the rivers of waters flowing out of the belly, the soul hath the activity of a river, and makes haste to be swallowed up in God, as the streams of the river in the sea. Christ makes his people *kings and priests to God, Rev.* 1. 6.; first kings, then priests: gives first a royal temper of heart, that they may offer spiritual sacrifices as priests:

* Lady Falkland's Life, page 130.

kings and priests to God acting with a magnificent spirit in all their motions to him. We cannot be spiritual priests till we be spiritual kings. The Spirit appeared in the likeness of fire, and where he resides communicates like fire, purity and activity.

Dulness is against the light of nature. I do not remember that the heathen ever offered a snail to any of their false deities, nor an ass, but to Priapus their unclean idol; but the Persians sacrificed to the sun a horse, a swift and generous creature. God provided against those in the law, commanding an ass's firstling, the offspring of a sluggish creature, to be redeemed, or his neck broke, but by no means to be offered to him. God is a spirit infinitely active, and therefore frozen and benumbed frames are unsuitable to him. He *rides upon a cherub*, and flies; he comes upon the *wings of the wind;* he rides upon a *swift cloud;* and therefore demands of us not a dull reason, but an active spirit. God is a living God, and therefore must have a lively service. Christ is life, and slothful adorations are not fit to be offered up in the name of life. The worship of God is called *wrestling* in Scripture, and Paul was a striver in the service of his Master, *Col.* 1. 29, *in an agony*, ἀγωνιζόμενος. Angels worship God spiritually; they worship Christ, and are made flames of fire.

If it be thus, how may we charge ourselves? What Paul said of the sensual widow, that she is *dead while she lives*, we may say often of ourselves, we are dead while we worship. Our hearts are in duty as the Jews were in deliverances, as those in a *dream*, *Psa.* 126. 1; by which unexpectedness, God shewed the greatness of his care and mercy; and we attend him as men in a dream whereby we discover our negligence and folly. This activity doth not consist in outward acts. The body may be hot and the heart may be faint; but in an inward stirring, meltings, flights. In the highest raptures the body is most insensible. Strong spiritual affections are abstracted from outward sense.

6. Spiritual worship is performed with *spiritual habits.* When all the living springs of grace are opened, as the

fountains of the deep were in the deluge, the soul and all that is within it, all the spiritual impresses of God upon it, erect themselves to *bless his holy name.* This is necessary to make a worship spiritual. As natural agents are determined to act suitable to their proper nature; so rational agents, are to act conformable to a rational being: when there is a conformity between the act and the nature whence it flows, it is a good act in its kind; if it be rational it is a good rational act, because suitable to its principle; as a man endowed with reason must act suitable to that endowment, and exercise his reason in his acting, so a Christian endued with grace must act suitably to that nature, and exercise his grace in his acting. Acts done by a natural inclination are no more human acts, than the natural acts of a beast may be said to be human; though they are the acts of a man, as he is the efficient cause of them, yet they are not human acts, because they arise not from that principle of reason which denominates him a man. So acts of worship performed by a bare exercise of reason, are not christian and spiritual acts, because they come not from the principles which constitute him a christian; reason is not the principle, for then all rational creatures would be christians; they ought therefore to be acts of a higher principle; exercises of that grace whereby christians are what they are. Not but that rational acts in worship are due to God; for worship is due from us as men; and we are settled in that rank of being by our reason. Grace doth not exclude reason, but ennobles it and calls it up to another form: yet we must not rest in a bare rational worship, but exert that principle whereby we are christians. To worship God with our reason is to worship him as men: to worship God with our grace, is to worship him as christians, and so spiritually: but to worship him only with our bodies, is to act no better than irrational creatures.

Our desires of the word are to issue from the regenerate principle, 1 *Pet.* 2. 2, *As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word.* This seems to be not a comparison but a restriction. All worship must

have the same principle, and be the exercise of that principle: otherwise we can have no communion with God. Friends that have the same habitual dispositions, have a fundamental fitness for an agreeable converse with one another; but if the temper wherein their likeness consists, be languishing, and the string out of tune, there is not an actual fitness; and the present indisposition breaks the converse, and renders the company troublesome. Though we may have the habitual graces which compose in us a resemblance to God, yet for want of acting those suitable dispositions, we render ourselves unfit for his converse, and make the worship, which is fundamentally spiritual, actually carnal. As the will cannot naturally act to any object, but by the exercise of its affections, so the heart cannot spiritually act towards God, but by the exercise of grace. This is God's music, *Eph.* 5. 19, *singing and making melody to God in your hearts.* Singing and all other acts of worship are outward, but the spiritual melody is by *grace in the heart*, *Col.* 3. 16. This renders it a spiritual worship; for it is an effect of the fulness of the spirit in the soul, as ver. 19. *But be filled with the spirit:* the overflowing of the Spirit in the heart, setting the soul of a believer thus on work to make spiritual melody to God, shews that something higher than bare reason is put in tune in the heart. Then is the fruit of the garden pleasant to Christ, when the Holy Spirit, the *north and south wind blow upon the spices*, and strike out the fragrancy of them. *Cant.* 4. 16. Since God is the author of all the graces, and bestows them to have a glory from them, they are best employed about him and his service It is fit he should have the cream of his own gifts. Without the exercise of grace we perform but a work of nature, and offer him nothing that he can accept. The whole set of graces must be one way or other exercised. If any treble be wanting in a lute, there will be a great defect in the music. If any one spiritual string be dull, the spiritual harmony of worship will be spoiled. And therefore,

Faith must be acted in worship. A natural worship

cannot be performed without a natural confidence in the goodness of God. Whosoever comes to him, must regard him as a *rewarder* and a *faithful Creator*, *Heb.* 11. 6. A spiritual worship cannot be performed without an evangelical confidence in him as a gracious Redeemer. To think him a tyrant meditating revenge, damps the soul; to regard him as a gracious king full of mercy, spirits the affections to him. The mercy of God is the proper object of trust, *Psal.* 33. 18. *The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.* The worship of God in the old testament is most described by *fear:* in the new testament by *faith.* Fear, or the worship of God, and hope in his mercy, are linked together; when they go hand in hand, the accepting eye of God is upon us: when we do not trust, we do not worship. The people of Judah had the temple worship among them, especially in Josiah's time, *Zeph.* 3. 2; yet it was accounted no worship, because there was no trust in the worshippers. Interest in God, cannot be improved without the exercise of faith. The gospel worship is prophesied of, to be a confidence in God, as in a husband more than in a Lord, *Hos.* 2. 16. *Thou shalt call me* Ishi, *and shalt call me no more* Baali: *Thou shalt call me,* that is, thou shalt worship me. Worship being often comprehended under invocation. More confidence is to be exercised in a husband or father, than in a lord or master.

If a man have not faith, he is without Christ; and though a man be in Christ by the habit of faith, he performs a duty out of Christ, without an act of faith: without the habit of faith, our persons are out of Christ; and without the exercise of faith, the duties are out of Christ. As the want of faith in a person is the death of the soul; so the want of faith in a service, is the death of the offering. Though a man were at the cost of an ox; yet to kill it without bringing it to the *door of the tabernacle,* was not a sacrifice, but a murder, *Levit.* 17. 3, 4. The tabernacle was a type of Christ; and looking to him is necessary in every spiritual sacrifice. As there must be faith to make any act an act of obedience; so

there must be faith to make any act of worship spiritual. That service is not spiritual that is not vital; and it cannot be vital without the exercise of a vital principle. All spiritual *life is hid in Christ*, and drawn from him by faith, *Gal.* 2, 20. Faith, as it hath relation to Christ, makes every act of worship, a living act, and consequently a spiritual act. Habitual unbelief cuts us off from Christ, *Rom.* 11. 20. *Because of unbelief they were broken off;* and a want of actuated belief breaks us off from a present communion with Christ in spirit. As unbelief in us hinders Christ from doing any mighty work, so unbelief in us hinders us from doing any spiritual duty. So that the exercise of faith, and a confidence in God, is necessary to every duty.

Love must be acted to render a worship spiritual. Though God commanded love in the old testament; yet the manner of giving the law, bespoke more of fear than love. The dispensation of the law was with *fire, thunder*, &c. proper to raise horror, and benumb the spirit; which effect it had upon the Israelites, when they desired that God would speak no more to them. Grace is the genius of the gospel, proper to excite the affection of love. The law was given by the *disposition of angels*, with signs to amaze; the gospel was ushered in with the songs of angels, composed of peace and good will, calculated to allure and delight the soul. Instead of the terrible voice of the law, *do this and live;* the comfortable voice of the gospel is *grace, grace.* Upon this account, the principle of the old testament was fear; the principle of the new testament is love. The *Mount Sinai gendereth to bondage;* Mount Sion, from whence the gospel of evangelical law goes forth, gendereth to *liberty;* and therefore the *spirit of bondage unto fear*, as the property of the law, is opposed to the state of *adoption*, the principle of love, as the property of the gospel, *Rom.* 8. 15. And therefore the worship of God under the gospel, or new testament, is oftener expresed by love than fear; as proceeding from higher principles, and exercising nobler passions. In this state, we are to *serve him without fear;* without bondage-fear; not without a fear of offending

him; with a fear of his goodness, *Hos.* 9. 5. Goodness is not the object of terror, but reverence. God in the law, had more the garb of a Judge; in the gospel, of a Father: the name of a Father is sweeter, and bespeaks more of affection. As their services were with a feeling of the thunders of the law in their consciences; so is our worship to be with a sense of gospel-grace in our spirits. Spiritual worship is that therefore, which is exercised with a spiritual and heavenly affection, proper to the gospel. The heart should be enlarged, according to the liberty the gospel gives of drawing near to God as a Father; as he gives us the nobler relation of children, we are to act the nobler qualities of children. Love should act according to its nature, which is desire of union; desire of a moral union by affections, as well as a mystical union by faith; as flame aspires to reach flame, and become one with it. In every act of worship, we should endeavour to be united to God, and become one spirit with him; this grace spiritualizes worship. In that one word love, God hath included all the devotion he requires of us; the total sum of the first table is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.* It is to be acted in every thing we do; but in worship, our hearts should more solemnly rise up and acknowledge him as amiable and lovely, since the law is stripped of its cursing power, and made sweet in the blood of the Redeemer. Love is a grace acceptable of itself; but nothing is acceptable without it. The gifts of one man to another are spiritualized by it. We would not value a present, without the affection of the donor: every man would lay claim to the love of others, though he would not to their possessions. Love is God's right in every service, and the noblest thing we can bestow upon him in our adorations of him. God's gifts to us are not so estimable, without his love; nor our services valued by him, without the exercise of affection. Hezekiah regarded not his deliverance, without the love of the deliverer; *In love to my soul thou hast delivered me, Isa.* 38. 17. So doth God say, in love to my honour thou hast worshipped me.

A spiritual *sensibleness of our own weakness*, is neces-

sary to make our worship spiritual. Affection to God cannot be without relentings in ourselves. When the eye is spiritually fixed upon a spiritual God, the heart will mourn, that the worship is no more spiritually suitable. The more we exercise love to God, as amiable and gracious, the more we should exercise grief in ourselves, as we are vile and offending. Spiritual worship is a melting, as well as an elevating worship: it exalts God, and debaseth the creature. The publican was more spiritual in his humble address to God, when the pharisee was wholly carnal with his swelling language. A spiritual love in worship will make us grieve, that we have given him so little, and could give him no more. It is a part of spiritual duty to bewail our carnality mixed with it; as we receive mercies spiritually, when we receive them with a sense of God's goodness and our own vileness, in the same manner we render a spiritual worship.

Spiritual desires for God render the service spiritual. When the soul *follows hard after him;* pursues after God as a God of infinite communicative goodness, with sighs and groans unutterable. A spiritual soul seems to be transformed into hunger, and thirst, and becomes nothing but desire. A carnal worshipper is taken with the beauty and magnificence of the temple; a spiritual worshipper desires to see the glory of God in the sanctuary; he *pants* after God: As he came to worship, to find God, so he is loath to go from it without God, *the living* God, *Psal.* 42. 2. He would see the *Urim* and the *Thummim;* the unusual sparkling of the stones upon the high-priest's breast-plate. That deserves not the title of spiritual worship, when the soul makes no longing inquiries; *saw you him whom my soul loves?* A spiritual worship is, when our desires are chiefly for God in the worship; as David desires to dwell in the house of the Lord; but his desire is not terminated there, but *to behold the beauty of the Lord,* and taste the reviving sweetness of his presence. No doubt but Elijah's desires for the enjoyment of God, while he was mounting to heaven, were as fiery as the chariot wherein he was

carried. Unutterable groans in worship are the fruit of the spirit, and certainly render it a spiritual service, *Rom.* 8. 26. Strong appetites are agreeable to God, and prepare us to eat the fruit of worship. A spiritual Paul presseth forward to *know Christ, and the power of his resurrection;* and a spiritual worshipper actually aspires in every duty to know God, and the power of his grace. To desire worship as an end, is carnal; to desire it as a means, and exercise desires in it for communion with God, is spiritual, and the fruit of a spiritual life.

Thankfulness, and admiration are to be exercised in spiritual services. Praise is the adoration of the blessed angels, and of glorified spirits, *Isa.* 6. 3. *Rev.* 4. 11. *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power:* And *Rev.* 5. 13, 14, they worship him, ascribing *blessing, honour, glory, and power to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.* Other acts of worship are confined to this life, and leave us as soon as we have set our foot in heaven; there no notes but this of praise are warbled out. The power, wisdom, love, and grace in the dispensation of the gospel, seat themselves in the thoughts and tongues of blessed souls. Can that worship on earth be spiritual, that hath no mixture of an eternal heavenly duty in it? The worship of God in innocence was chiefly an admiration of him in the works of creation; and should not our evangelical worship be an admiration of him in the work of redemption, which is a restoration to a better state? After the petitioning for pardoning grace, there is a rendering the *calves* or heifers *of our lips,* alluding to the heifers used in eucharistical sacrifices, *Hos.* 14. 2. The praise of God is the choicest sacrifice and worship, under the dispensation of redeeming grace; this is the prime and eternal part of worship under the gospel. The Psalmist, *Psal.* 149 and 150, speaking of the gospel times, animates to this kind of worship; *sing to the Lord a new song; let the children of Zion be joyful in their king; let the saints be joyful in glory, and sing aloud upon their beds; let the high praises of God be in*

their mouths: He begins and ends both Psalms with Praise ye the Lord. That cannot be a spiritual and evangelical worship, that hath nothing of the praise of God in the heart. The consideration of God's adorable perfections discovered in the gospel, will make us come to him with more seriousness; ask blessings of him with more confidence; fly to him with more faith and love, and more spiritually glorify him in our attendances upon him.

Spiritual worship is performed with *delight*. The evangelical worship is prophetically signified by keeping the feast of tabernacles, *Zach.* 14. 16, *they shall go up from year to year, to worship the King the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles:* Why that feast, when there were other feasts observed by the Jews? That was a feast celebrated with the greatest joy; typical of the gladness which was to prevail under the reign of the Messiah, and a thankful commemoration of the redemption wrought by him. It was to be celebrated five days after the *solemn day of atonement, Levit.* 23. 34, compared with ver. 27, wherein there was one of the most solemn types of the sacrifice of Christ. In this feast they commemorated their exchange of Egypt for Canaan; the manna wherewith they were fed; the water out of the rock wherewith they were refreshed. In remembrance of this they poured water on the ground, pronouncing those words in Isaiah, they shall *draw waters out of the wells of salvation*, which our Saviour refers to himself, *John* 7. 37, inviting them to him, to drink *upon the last day, the great day of the feast* of tabernacles, wherein this solemn ceremony was observed. Since we are freed by the death of the Redeemer from the curses of the law, God requires of us a joy in spiritual privileges. A sad frame in worship gives the lie to all gospel liberty; to the purchase of the Redeemer's death; the triumphs of his resurrection; it is as if we were under the influences of the legal fire and lightning; it is entering a protest against the freedom of the gospel. Evangelical worship is a spiritual, and praise, joy, and delight are prophesied of, as great ingredients in attendance on gospel ordinances, *Isa.* 12. 3, 4, 5. What

was the occasion of terror in the worship of God under the law, is the occasion of delight in the worship of God under the gospel. The justice and holiness of God so terrible in the law, becomes comfortable under the gospel, since they have feasted themselves on the active and passive obedience of the Redeemer. The approach is to God as *gracious*, not to God as unpacified; as a son to a father, not as a criminal to a judge. Under the law God was represented as a judge, remembering their sin in their sacrifices, and representing the punishment they had merited; in the gospel as a father, accepting the atonement, and publishing reconciliation wrought by the Redeemer. Delight in God, is a gospel frame; therefore the more joyful the more spiritual. The *sabbath is to be a delight;* not only in regard of the day, but in the duties of it, *Isa.* 58. 13, in the marvellous work he wrought on it; raising up our blessed Redeemer on that day, whereby a foundation was laid for rendering our persons and services acceptable to God, *Psa.* 118. 24. *This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice in it.* A dull, heavy frame becomes not a day and a duty, that hath so noble and spiritual a mark upon it.

The angels in the first act of worship after the creation, were highly joyful, *Job.* 38. 7. They *shouted for joy.* The saints have particularly acted this in their worship. David would not content himself with an approach to the altar, without going to God as his *exceeding joy*, *Psal.* 43. 4. My triumphant joy: when he danced before the ark, he seems to be transformed into delight and pleasure, 2 *Sam.* 6. 14, 16. He had as much delight in worship, as others had in their harvest and vintage. And those that took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, would as joyfully attend upon the communications of God. Where there is a fulness of the spirit, there is a *making melody to God in the heart;* and where there is an acting of love, the proper fruit of it is joy in a near approach to the object of the soul's affection. Love is *appetitus unionis*. the more love, the more delight in the approachings of God to the soul, or the out goings of the soul to God. As the object of worship is amiable in a spiritual eye, so

the means tending to communion with this object are delightful in the exercise; where there is no delight in a duty, there is no delight in the object of it. The more of grace, the more of pleasure in the actings of it. As the more of nature there is in any natural agent, the more of pleasure there is in the act; so the more heavenly the worship, the more spiritual. Delight is the frame and temper of glory. A heart filled with joy, is a heart *filled with the spirit;* joy is the fruit of the Holy Ghost.

It is not the joy of God's dispensation flowing from God, but *a gracious active joy* streaming to God. There is a joy when the comforts of God are dropt into the soul as oil upon the wheel; which indeed makes the faculties move with more speed and activity in his service, like the *chariots* of *Aminadab:* and a soul may serve God in the strength of this taste, and its delight terminate in the sensible comfort. This is not the joy I mean, but such a joy as hath God for its object, delighting in him as the term, in worship as the way to him; the first is God's dispensation, the other is our duty; the first is an act of God's favour to us, the second an evidence of habitual grace in us. The comforts we have from God may elevate our duties; but the grace we have within, will spiritualize our duties..

Nor is every delight an argument of a spiritual service. All the requisites to worship must be taken in. A man may invent a worship, and delight in it; as Micah in the adoration of his idol, when he was glad he had got both an Ephod and a Levite, *Judges* 17. As a man may have contentment in sin, so he may have contentment in worship; not because it is the worship of God, but the worship of his own invention, agreeable to his own humour and design, as *Isa.* 58. 2, it is said, they *delighted in approaching to God;* but it was for carnal ends. Novelty engenders complacence; but it must be a worship wherein God will delight; and that must be according to his own rule and infinite wisdom, and not our shallow fancies. God requires a cheerfulness in his service, especially under the gospel, where he sits upon a throne of grace, and discovers his amiableness in the co-

venant of grace, and the sweet relation of a father. The priests of old were not to sully themselves with any sorrow, when they were in the exercise of their functions. God put a bar to the natural affections of Aaron and his sons, when Nadab and Abihu had been cut off, *Lev.* 10. 6. Every true christian in a higher order of priesthood, is a person dedicated to joy and peace, offering himself a lively sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; and there is no christian duty, but is to be set off and seasoned with cheerfulness. He that *loves a cheerful giver* in acts of charity, requires no less a cheerful spirit in acts of worship; as this is an ingredient in worship, so it is the means to make your spirits intent in worship. When the heart triumphs in the consideration of divine excellency and goodness, it will be angry at any thing that offers to disturb it.

Spiritual worship is to be performed, though with a delight in God; yet *with a deep reverence of God.* The gospel in advancing the spirituality of worship, takes off the terror, but not the reverence of God; which is nothing in its own nature, but a due and high esteem of the excellency of a thing according to the nature of it. And therefore the gospel presenting us with more illustrious notices of the glorious nature of God, is so far from indulging any disesteem of him, that it requires of us a greater reverence suitable to the height of its discovery, above what could be read in the Book of Creation. The gospel worship is therefore expressed by trembling, *Hos.* 11. 10. *They shall walk after the Lord; he shall roar like a lion; when he shall roar then the children shall tremble from the west.* When the lion of the tribe of Judah shall lift up his powerful voice in the gospel, the western Gentiles shall run trembling to walk after the Lord. God hath always attended his greatest manifestations with remarkable characters of majesty? He caused the *wind to march before him;* to cut the mountain, when he manifested himself to Elijah, 1 *Kings* 19. 11. *There were a wind and a cloud of fire,* before that magnificent vision to Ezekiel, *Ezek.* 1. 4, 5; *thunders and lightnings* before the giving of the law, *Exod.* 19. 18; and a *mighty wind* be-

fore the giving of the Spirit, *Acts* 2. God requires of us an awe of him in the very act of performance. The angels are pure, and cannot fear him as sinners, but in reverence *they cover their faces* when they stand before him. His power should make us reverence him, as we are creatures; his justice as we are sinners; his goodness as we are restored creatures. * "God is clothed with unspeakable majesty; the glory of his face shines brighter than the lights of heaven in their beauty. Before him the angels tremble, and the heavens melt; we ought not therefore to come before him with *the sacrifice of fools*, nor tender a duty to him without falling low upon our faces, and bowing our hearts in token of reverence." Not a slavish fear, like that of devils; but a godly fear like that of saints, joined with a sense of an *unmoveable kingdom*, becometh us. And this the apostle calls a grace necessary to make our service acceptable; and therefore the grace necessary to make it spiritual, since nothing finds admission to God, but what is of a spiritual nature. The consideration of his glorious nature, should imprint an awful respect upon our souls to him; his goodness should make his majesty more adorable to us, as his majesty makes his goodness more admirable in his condescensions to us. As *God is a spirit*, our worship must be spiritual; and believing he is the supreme spirit, our worship must be reverential. We must observe the state he assumes in his ordinances; *he is in heaven; we upon the earth;* we must not therefore *be hasty to utter any thing before God, Eccles.* 5. 7. Consider him as a spirit in the highest heavens, and ourselves spirits dwelling on earth. Loose and thoughtless frames debase him to our own quality: slight postures of spirit, treat him as a mean being. Our being in covenant with him, must not lower our awful apprehensions of him; though he lay by his justice to believers, he doth not lay by his majesty; when we have a confidence in him, because he is the Lord our God, we must have awful thoughts of his majesty, because his name is glorious. God is *terrible* from his holy places in regard of the great

* Daille sur. 3 Jean. p. 150.

things he doth for his Israel. *Psal.* 68. 35. We should behave ourselves with that inward honour and respect of him, as if he were present to our bodily eyes: the higher apprehensions we have of his majesty, the greater awe will be upon our hearts in his presence, and the greater spirituality in our acts of worship. We should manage our hearts so, as if we had a view of God in his heavenly glory.

Spiritual worship is to be performed with *humility* in our spirits. This will follow reverence of God. As we are to have high thoughts of God, that we may not debase him; we must have low thoughts of ourselves, not to vaunt before him. When we have right notions of the divine majesty, we shall be as worms in our own thoughts, and in his presence; we can never consider him in his glory, but we should reflect upon ourselves, and consider how basely we revolted from him, and how graciously we are restored by him. As the gospel affords us greater discoveries of God's nature, so it helps us to a fuller understanding of our own vileness and weakness, and therefore is proper to engender humility: the more spiritual and evangelical therefore any service is, the more humble it is. That is a spiritual service that most eminently manifests the glory of God: and this cannot be manifested by us, without manifesting our own emptiness and nothingness. The heathens were sensible of the necessity of humility by the light of nature;* after the name of God signified by Ἔι inscribed on the temple at *Delphos*, followed Γνῶθι σεαυτον, whereby was insinuated, that when we have to do with God, who is the only *Ens*, we should behave ourselves with a sense of our own infirmity, and infinite distance from him. As a person, so a duty leavened with pride, has nothing of sincerity, and therefore nothing of spirituality in it, *Hab.* 2. 4. *His soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him.* The elders that were crowned to be kings and priests, to offer spiritual sacrifices; uncrown themselves in their worship of him, and cast down their ornaments at *his feet.*† The Greek word

* Plutarch Moral. p. 344.

† Revel. 4. 10. compared with 5. and 10.

to worship προσκυνεῖν, signifies to lie low. How deep should our sense be of the privilege of God's admitting us to his worship, and affording us such a mercy under our deserts of wrath? How mean should be our thoughts, both of our persons and performances? How patiently should we wait upon God for the success of worship? How did Abraham the Father of the faithful, debase himself, when he supplicated the God of heaven, and devoted himself to him under the title of *dust and ashes? Gen.* 18. 27. Isaiah did but behold an evangelical appearance of God, and the angels worshipping him, and presently he reflects upon his own uncleanness, *Isa. 6. 5.* God's presence both requires and causes humility. How lowly is David in his own opinion, after a magnificent duty performed by himself and his people? 1 *Chron.* 29. 14. *Who am I; And what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly?* The more spiritual the soul is in its carriage to God, the more humble it is; and the more gracious God is in his communications to the soul, the lower it lies.

God commanded not the fiercer creatures to be offered to him in sacrifices, but lambs and kids, meek and lowly creatures; none that had stings in their tails or venom in their tongues.* The meek lamb was the daily sacrifice; the doves were to be offered by pairs; God would not have honey mixed with any sacrifice, *Levit.* 2. 11, that breeds choler, and choler pride; but he commanded oil to be used, that supplies and mollifies. Swelling pride, and boiling passions render our services carnal; they cannot be spiritual, without an humble sweetness and an innocent sincerity; one grain of this transcends the most costly sacrifices. *A contrite heart* is the glory of our worship. *Psal.* 51. 16, 17. The departure of men and angels from God, began in pride; our approaches and return to him must begin in humility: and therefore all those graces which are founded on humility, must be acted in worship, as faith and a sense of our own indigence. Our blessed Saviour, the most spiritual worshipper, pros-

* Caudam aculeatam vel linguam nigram. Alexand. ab. Alex. l. 3. c 12.

trated himself in the garden with the greatest lowliness, and offered himself upon the cross a sacrifice with the greatest humility. Lowly souls in worship, have the most spiritual conformity to the person of Christ in the state of humiliation, and his design in that state: as worship without it is not suitable to God, so neither is it advantageous for us. A time of worship, is a time of God's communication. The vessel must be melted to receive the mould it is designed for; softened wax is fittest to receive the stamp, and a spiritually melted soul fittest to receive a spiritual impression. We cannot perform duty in an evangelical and spiritual strain, without the susceptible humble state which the gospel requires.

Spiritual worship is to be performed with holiness. God is a holy Spirit; a likeness to God must attend his worship. *Holiness* is always in season; *it becomes his house for ever.* We can never serve the *living God,* till we have *consciences purged from dead works, Heb.* 9. 14. Dead works in our consciences, are unsuitable to God, an eternal living Spirit. The more mortified the heart, the more quickened the service. Nothing can please an infinite purity, but that which is pure; since God is in his glory in his ordinances, we must not be in our uncleanness. The holiness of his Spirit shines in his ordinances; the holiness of our spirits ought also to shine in our observance of them. The holiness of God is most celebrated in the worship of angels;* and spiritual worship ought to be like angelical: that cannot be with souls totally impure. As there must be perfect holiness to make worship perfectly spiritual; so there must be some degree of holiness to make it in any measure spiritual. God would have all the utensils of the sanctuary employed about his service to be holy: the inwards of the sacrifice were to be rinsed thrice. The crop and feathers of sacrificed doves, were to be hung eastward towards the entrance of the temple, at a distance from the holy of holies where the presence of God was most eminent. When Aaron was to go into the holy of holies, he was to *sanctify himself*

* Isa. 6. 3 Revel. 4. 8.

in an extraordinary manner. *Lev.* 1. 16. and 16. 4. The priests were to be *bare-footed* in the temple, in the exercise of their office; shoes always were to be put off upon holy ground: look to thy *foot when thou goest to the house of God*, saith the wise man, *Eccles*, 5. 1. Strip the affections, the wings of the soul, of all the impurities contracted; discard all earthly and base thoughts from the heart. A beast was not to touch the Mount Sinai, without losing his life; nor can we come near the throne with brutish affections, without losing the life and fruit of worship. An unholy soul degrades himself from a spirit to a brute, and the worship from spiritual to brutish. If any unmortified sin be found in the life, as it was in the comers to the temple, it taints and pollutes the worship. *Isa.* 1. 15. *Jer.* 7. 9, 10. All worship is an acknowledgment of the excellency of God as he is holy: hence it is called a *sanctifying God's name.* But how can any person sanctify God's name, that hath not a holy resemblance to his nature? If he be not *holy as he is holy*, he cannot worship him according to his excellency, *in spirit and in truth:* no worship is spiritual wherein we have not communion with God. But what intercourse can there be between a holy God, and an impure creature; between light and darkness? We have no fellowship with him in any service, unless we *walk in the light*, in service and out of service, *as he is light.* 1 *John* 1. 7. The heathen thought not their sacrifices agreeable to God, without washing their hands, whereby they signified the preparation of their hearts, before they made the oblation: clean hands without a pure heart, signify nothing. The frame of our hearts must answer the purity of the outward symbols, *Psal.* 26. 6, *I will wash my hands in innocence, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.* He would observe the appointed ceremonies, but not without cleansing his heart as well as his hands. Vain man is apt to rest upon outward acts and rites of worship, but this must always be practised; the words are in the present tense, *I wash, I compass.* Purity in worship ought to be our continual care. If we would perform a spiritual service, wherein we would have communion with

God, it must be in holiness; if we would walk with Christ it must be in white, *Rev.* 3. 4, alluding to the white garments the priests put on, when they went to perform their service. As without this we cannot see God in heaven, so neither can we see the beauty of God in his ordinances.

Spiritual worship is performed with *spiritual ends*, with raised aims at the glory of God. No duty can be spiritual that hath a carnal aim. Where God is the sole object, he ought to be the principle end. In all our actions he is to be our end, as he is the principle of our being; much more in religious acts, as he is the object of our worship. The worship of God in scripture, is expressed by the *seeking of him*, *Heb.* 11. 6. *Him*, not ourselves; all is to be be referred to God. As we are *not to live to ourselves*, that being the sign of a carnal state; so we are not to worship for ourselves, *Rom.* 14. 7, 8. As all actions are denominated good from their end, as well as their object; so upon the same account they are denominated spiritual. The end spiritualizeth our natural actions, much more our religious; then are our faculties devoted to him when they centre in him. If the intention be evil, there is nothing but darkness in the whole service, *Luke* 11. 34. The first institution of the sabbath, the solemn day for worship, was to contemplate the glory of God in his stupendous works of creation, and render him a homage for them, *Rev.* 4. 11. *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honour, glory, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* No worship can be returned, without glorifying God; and we cannot actually glorify him, without direct aims at the promoting his honour. As we have immediately to do with God, so we are immediately to mind the praise of God. As we are not to content ourselves with habitual grace, but be rich in the exercise of it in worship; so we are not to acquiesce in habitual aims at the glory of God, without the actual overflowings of our hearts in those aims.

It is natural for man to worship God for self. Self-

righteousness is the rooted aim of man in his worship since his revolt from God; and being sensible it is not to be found in his natural actions, he seeks for it in his moral and religious. By the first pride we renounced our subjection to the sovereignty of God, and cast him off from being our end; since, a Pharisaical spirit struts it in nature, not only to do things to be seen of men, but to be admired by God, *Isa.* 58. 3, *Wherefore have we fasted and thou takest no knowledge?* This is to have God worship them, instead of being worshipped by them. Cain's carriage after his sacrifice, testified some base end in his worship; he came not to God as a subject to a sovereign, but as if he had been the sovereign, and God the subject; and when his design is not answered, and his desire gratified, he proves more a rebel to God, and at last a murderer of his brother. Such base scents will rise up in our worship from the body of death which cleaves to us, and mix themselves with our services, as weeds with the fish in the net. David therefore, after his people had offered willingly to the temple, begs of God, 1 *Chron.* 29. 18, that their *hearts might be prepared to him;* that their hearts might stand right to God, without any regard to selfish ends.

Some present themselves to God, as poor men offer a present to a great person; not to honour him, but to gain for themselves a reward richer than their gift. *What prophet is it that we have kept his ordinance,* &c. *Mal.* 3. 14. Some worship him, intending thereby to made him amends for the wrong they have done him; and wipe off their scores, as though a spiritual wrong could be recompensed with a bodily service, and an infinite Spirit be outwitted and appeased by carnal flattery. Self is the spirit of carnality. To pretend a homage to God, and intend only the advantage of self, is rather to mock him, than worship him. When we believe that we ought to be satisfied, rather than God glorified; we set God below ourselves, and imagine that he should submit his own honour to our advantage: we make ourselves more glorious than God, as though we were not made for him, but he for us; this is to have a very low

esteem of the majesty of God. Whatsoever any man aims at in worship before the glory of God, that he forms as an idol to himself instead of God, and sets up as a golden image: But God does not count this worship. The offerings made in the wilderness for forty years together, he esteemed as not offered to him, *Amos*, 5. 25, *Have you offered to me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?* They did it not to God, but to themselves; for their own security, and the attainment of the promised land. A spiritual worshipper performs not worship for carnal advantage; he uses ordinances as means to bring God and his soul together; to be more fitted to honour God in the world, in his particular place. When he hath been animated and humble in any duty, he gives God the glory; he ascribes the kingdom, power, and glory to God alone; and if any viper of pride starts out upon him, he endeavours presently to shake it off. That which was the first end of our framing, ought to be the chief end of our acting towards God: but when men have the same ends in worship as brutes, the satisfaction of a sensitive part; the service is no more than brutish. The acting for a sensitive end, is unworthy of the majesty of God to whom we address ourselves, and unbecoming a rational creature. Acting for a sensitive end, is not rational, much less can it be spiritual service; though the act may be good in itself yet not good in the agent, because he wants a right end. We are then spiritual, when we have the same end in our redeemed services, as God had in his redeeming love, viz. his own glory.

Spiritual service is offered to God *in the name of Christ*. Those are only *spiritual sacrifices, that are offered up to God by Jesus Christ*;* that are the fruits of the sanctification of the Spirit, and offered in the mediation of the Son; as the altar sanctifies the gift, so doth Christ spiritualize our services for God's acceptation; as the fire upon the altar separated the airy and finer parts of the

* 1 Peter 2. 5.

sacrifice from the terrene and earthly. This is the *golden altar* upon which the prayers of the saints are offered up *before the throne.** As all that we have from God streams through his blood, so all that we give to God ascends by virtue of his merits. All the blessings God gave to the Israelites came out of Sion,† that is, from the gospel hid under the law; all the duties we present to God are to be presented in Sion, in an evangelical manner; all our worship must be founded on Christ. God hath intended that we should *honour the Son as we honour the Father.* As we honour the Father by offering our service only to him, so we are to honour the Son by offering it only in his name. In him alone God is well pleased, because in him alone he finds our services spiritual and worthy of acceptation. We must therefore take fast hold of him with our spirits, and the faster we hold him, the more spiritual is our worship. To do any thing in the name of Christ, is not to believe the worship shall be accepted for itself, but to have our eye fixed upon Christ for the acceptance of it, and not to rest upon the work done. The creatures present their acknowledgments to God by man; and man can only present his by Christ. It was utterly unlawful after the building of the temple, to sacrifice any where else; the temple being a type of Christ, it is utterly unlawful for us to present our services in any other name.

If we consider God out of Christ, we can have no other notions but of horror and bondage. We behold him a Spirit, but environed with justice and wrath; but the consideration of him in Christ, vails his justice; draws forth his mercy; represents him more as a father than a judge. In Christ the aspect of justice is changed, and by that the temper of the creature; so that in and by this Mediator, we can have, *Eph.* 3. 12. spiritual *boldness, and access to God with confidence;* whereby the spirit is kept from deadness and distraction; and our souls are quickened and refined. The thoughts kept upon Christ in duty of worship, quickly elevate the soul, and spiritua-

* Rev. 8. 3 † Psal. 134, 3. The Lord bless thee out of Sion.

lize the whole service. Sin makes our services black, and the blood of Christ makes both our persons and services white. To conclude this head. God is a spirit infinitely happy, therefore we must approach him with chearfulness; he is a spirit of infinite majesty, therefore we must come before him with reverence; he is a spirit infinitely high, therefore we must offer up our sacrifices with the deepest humility; he is a spirit infinitely holy, therefore we must address him with purity; he is a spirit infinitely glorious, we must therefore acknowledge his excellency in all that we do, and in our measures contribute to his glory, by having the highest aims in his worship; he is a spirit infinitely provoked by us, therefore we must offer up our worship in the name of a pacifying Mediator.

PART V.

REASONS FOR SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

God is to be worshipped with the best we have—This was commanded under the law—Heathens practised this by the light of nature—The creatures serve man with the best—God gives us his choicest blessings—If we do not thus worship God, we act not as rational creatures—We perform no act of worship otherwise—Worship, man's approach to God—To be worshipped spiritually,—Is God's design in the redemption of his Son, and the sanctifying influence of his Spirit—No other worship can be acceptable to God.

THE third general subject for our consideration is, *why* a spiritual worship is due to God, and to be offered to him. We must consider the object, and the subject of worship; the worshipper and the worshipped. God is a

spiritual Being; man is a reasonable creature. The nature of God informs us, what is fit to be presented to him; our own nature informs us, what is fit to be presented by us.

Reason 1. *The best we have* is to be presented to God in worship. For, since God is *the most excellent Being*, he is to be served by us *with the most excellent thing we have*, and with the choicest veneration. God is so incomprehensibly excellent, that we cannot render him what he deserves; we must render him what we are able to offer; the best of our affections; the flower of our strength; the cream of our spirits. By the same reason that we are bound to give to God the best worship, we must offer it to him in the best manner. We cannot give to God any thing *too* good. God being a *great King*, slight services become not his majesty. It is unbecoming the majesty of God, and the reason of a creature, to give him a trivial thing. It is unworthy to bestow the best of our strength on our lust, and the worst and weakest in the service of God. An infinite Spirit, should have affections as near to infinite as we can; as he is a spirit without bounds, so he should have a service without limits. When we have given him all, we cannot serve him according to the excellency of his nature, *Josh.* 24. 19, and shall we give him less than all? His infinite excellence and our dependance upon him, as creatures, demands the choicest adoration: our spirits being the noblest part of our nature, are as due to him, as the service of our bodies which are the vilest. To serve him with the worst only, is to diminish his honour.

Under the law, God *commanded the best to be offered him.* He would have the males, the best of the kind, the fat the best of the creature. *Exod.* 29. 13. He commanded them to offer him the firstlings of the flock, not the firstlings of the womb, but the firstlings of the year. The Jewish cattle having two breeding times, in the beginning of the spring, and the beginning of September; the latter breed was the weaker, which Jacob knew, *Gen.* 30, when he laid the rods before the cattle, when they were strong in the spring, and withheld them when

they were feeble in the autumn. One reason as the Jews say, why God accepted not the offerings of Cain was, because he brought the meanest, not the best of the fruit; and therefore it is said only, that he brought of the fruit of the ground, *Gen.* 4. 3, not the first of the fruit, or the best of the fruit; as Abel, who brought the *firstling of his flock*, and the fat thereof, ver. 4.

And this *the heathen practised by the light of nature.* They for the most part offered males, as being more worthy; and burnt the male, not the female frankincense, as it is divided into those two kinds. They offered the best, when they offered their children to Moloch. Nothing more excellent than man, and nothing dearer to parents than their children, which are parts of themselves. When the Israelites would have a golden calf for a representation of God, they would dedicate their jewels, and strip their wives and children of their richest ornaments, to shew their devotion. Shall men serve their dumb idols with the best of their substance, and the strength of their souls; and shall the living God have a poorer service from us, than idols had from them? God requires no such hard, but delightful worship from us; he requires our hearts.

All creatures serve man, by the providential order of God, *with the best they have.* As we by God's appointment receive from creatures the best they can give, ought we not with a free will, to render God the best we can offer? The beasts give us their best fat; the trees their best fruit; the sun its best light; the fountains their best streams. Shall God order us the best from creatures, and we put him off with the worst from ourselves?

God hath given us the choicest thing he had. A Redeemer that was the *power of God, and the wisdom of God.* The best he had in heaven, his own Son, and in himself, a sacrifice for us, that we might be enabled to present ourselves a sacrifice to him. And Christ offered himself for us, the best he had, and that with the strength of the Deity *through the eternal Spirit;* and shall we withhold from him the best part of ourselves? As God would have a worship from his creature, so it must be with the

best part of his creature. If we have *given ourselves to the Lord*, we can worship with no less than ourselves. What is the man without his spirit? If we are to worship God with all that we have received from him, we must worship him with the best part we have received from him. It is but a small glory we can give him with the best, and shall we deprive him of his right by giving him the worst? As what we are, is from God; so what we are, ought to be for God. Our creation is the foundation of worship, *Psal.* 100. 2, 3, *Serve the Lord with gladness; know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us.* He hath ennobled us with spiritual affections; and where is it fittest for us to employ them, but upon him? and at what time, but when we come solemnly to converse with him? Is it justice to deny him the honour of his best gift to us? Our souls are more his gift to us, than any thing in the world; other things are so given that they are often taken from us, but our spirits are the most durable gift. Rational faculties cannot be removed without a dissolution of nature. Well then,* as he is God, he is to be honoured with all the ardour that the infiniteness and excellency of such a Being requires, and the incomparable obligations he hath laid upon us in this state deserve at our hands. In all our worship, therefore, our minds ought to be filled with the highest admiration, love, and reverence. Since our end was to glorify God, we answer not our end, and honour him not, unless we give him the choicest we have.

Reason 2. We cannot else act towards God *according to the nature of rational creatures.* Spiritual worship is due to God, because of his nature; and due from us, because of our nature. As we are to adore God, so we are to adore him as men; the nature of a rational creature makes this impression upon him; he cannot view his own nature without having this duty striking upon his mind. As he knows by inspection into himself, that there is a God that made him; so he knows that he is made to be in subjection to God; subjection to him in his spirit as

* Amyrald Mor. tom. 2. p. 311.

well as his body; and that he ought morally to testify this natural dependence on him. His constitution informs him, that he hath a capacity to converse with God; that he cannot converse with him but by those inward faculties. If this could be done by his body without his spirit, beasts might as well converse with God as men. It can never be a *reasonable service* as it ought to be, unless the reasonable faculties be employed in the management of it: it must be a worship prodigiously lame, without the concurrence of the chiefest part of man with it. As we are to act conformably to the nature of the object, so also to the nature of our own faculties. Our faculties in the very gift of them to us were destined to be exercised; about what? What? All other things but the Author of them. It is a conceit cannot enter into the heart of a rational creature, that he should act as such a creature in other things, and as a stone in things relating to the donor of them; as a man, with his mind about him in the affairs of the world, as a beast without reason in his acts towards God. If a man did not employ his reason in other things, he would be an unprofitable creature in the world; if he do not employ his spiritual faculties in worship, he denies them the proper end and use for which they were given him; and it is a practical denial that God hath given him a soul, and that God hath any right to the exercise of it. If there were no worship appointed by God in the world, the natural inclination of man to some kind of religion would be in vain; and if our inward faculties were not employed in the duties of religion, they would be in vain. The true end of God in these endowments would be defeated by us, if we did not serve him with that which we have from him solely at his own cost. As no man can with reason conclude, that the rest commanded on the sabbath and the sanctification of it, was only a rest of the body; that had been performed by the beasts as well as men; but some higher end was aimed at for the rational creature: so no man can think that the command for worship, terminated only in the presence of the body; that God should give the command

to man as a reasonable creature, and expect no other service from him than that of a brute.

God did not require a worship from man, for any want he had, or any essential honour that could accrue to him; but that men might testify their gratitude to him, and dependance upon him. It is the most horrid ingratitude, not to have lively and deep sentiments of gratitude after such obligations, and not to make those due acknowledgments that are proper for a rational creature. Religion is the highest and choicest act of a reasonable creature; no creature under heaven is capable of it that wants reason. As it is a violation of reason not to worship God, so it is no less a violation of reason not to worship him with the heart and spirit: it is a high dishonour to God, and deprives him not only of the service due to him from man, but that which is due to him from all the creatures. Every creature, as it is an effect of God's power and wisdom, passively worships God; that is, it affords matter of adoration to man that hath reason to collect it and return it where it is due. Without the exercise of the soul we can no more give it to God, than without such an exercise we can gather it from the creature: so that by this neglect, the creatures are restrained from answering their chief end; they cannot pay any service to God without man; nor can man without the employment of his rational faculties, render homage to God any more than beasts can. This engagement of our inward power stands firm and inviolable, let the modes of worship be what they will, or the changes of them by the sovereign authority of God never so frequent; this could not expire, or be changed as long as the nature of man endured. As man had not been capable of a command for worship, unless he had been endued with spiritual faculties; so he is not active in the true practice of worship, unless they be employed by him in it. The constitution of man makes this manner of worship perpetually obligatory; and the obligation can never cease, till man cease to be a creature furnished with such faculties. In our worship therefore if we would act like rational creatures, we should extend

all the powers of our souls to the utmost, and strive to obtain apprehensions of God, equal to the excellency of his nature, though such apprehensions can only be realized in his immediate presence.

Reason 3. Without this engagement of our spirits, *no act is an act of worship.* True worship being an acknowledgment of God and the perfections of his nature, results only from the soul, that being only capable of knowing God and those perfections, which are the object and motive of worship. The posture of the body is but to testify the inward temper and the affection of the mind: if therefore it testifies what it is not, it is a lie and no worship: the cringes a beast may be taught to make to an altar, may as well be called worship; since a man thinks as little of that God he pretends to honour, as the beast doth of the altar to which he bows. Worship is a reverent remembrance of God, and giving some honour to him with the intention of the soul: it cannot justly have the name of worship, that wants the essential part of it. It is an ascribing to God the glory of his nature, an owning subjection and obedience to him as our Sovereign Lord: this is as impossible to be performed without the spirit, as that there can be life and motion in a body without a soul. It is a drawing near to God, not in regard of his essential presence; so all things are near to God; but in an acknowledgment of his excellency, which is an act of the spirit; without this, the worst of men in a place of worship, are as near to God as the best. The necessity of the conjunction of our soul, arises from the nature of worship; which being the most serious thing we can be employed in, the highest converse with the highest object, requires the choicest temper of spirit in the performance. That cannot be an act of worship, which is not an act of piety and virtue; but there is no act of virtue done by the members of the body, without the concurrence of the powers of the soul. We may as well call the presence of a dead carcase in a place of worship, an act of religion, as the presence of a living body without an intent spirit: the separation of the soul from one is natural, the other moral; that renders

the body lifeless, but this renders the act loathsome to God: as the being of the soul gives life to the body, so the operation of the soul gives life to the actions: as he cannot be a man that wants the form of a man, a rational soul; so that cannot be a worship that wants an essential part, the act of the spirit. God would not honour that with the title of worship, which, though instituted by himself, wanted the essential qualities of such service. In the judgment of our Saviour, it is a *vain worship, when the traditions of men are taught for the doctrines of God, Mat.* 15. 9, and no less vain must it be, when the bodies of men are presented to supply the place of their spirits. As an omission of duty is a contempt of God's sovereign authority, so the omission of the manner of it, is a contempt of it, and of his amiable excellency; and that which is a contempt and mockery, can lay no just claim to the title of worship.

Reason 4. There is in worship, *an approach of God to man.* It was instituted to this purpose, that God might give his blessings to man: and ought not our spirits to be prepared and ready to receive his communications? We are in such acts, more peculiarly in his presence. In the Israelites hearing the law, it is said God was to *come among them, Exod.* 19. 10, 11. Then men are said to *stand before the Lord, Deut.* 10. 8. And therefore when Cain forsook the worship of God settled in his father's family, he is said *to go out from the presence of the Lord, Gen.* 4. 16. God is essentially present in the world; graciously present in his church. The name of the evangelical city is, *Jehovah Shammah; Ezek.* 48. 35. *the Lord is there.* God is more graciously present in the evangelical institutions, than in the legal: he *loves the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of* Jacob, *Psal.* 87. 2. His evangelical law and worship which was to go forth from Zion, as the other did from Sinai, *Mic.* 4. 2. God delights to approach men, and converse with them in the worship instituted in the gospel, more than in all the dwellings of Jacob. If God be graciously present, ought not we to be spiritually present? A lifeless carcase service, becomes not so high and delectable a presence as this.

In such service it is to thrust him from us, not invite him to us; this is to practice in the ordinances, what the prophet predicts concerning men's usage of our Saviour, *Isa.* 53. 2. *There is no form, no comeliness, nor beauty that we should desire him.* A slightness in worship reflects upon the excellency of the object of worship. God and his worship are so united together, that whosoever thinks the one not worth his inward care, esteems the other not worth his inward affection. How unworthy a slight is it of God, who proffers the opening of his treasure; the re-impressing his image; conferring his blessings; admits us into his presence, when he hath no need for us, who hath millions of angels to attend him in his court, and celebrate his praise? He that worships not God with his spirit, regards not God's presence in his ordinances, and slights the great end of God in them, and that by perfection he may attain by them. We can only expect what God hath promised to give, when we render to him what he hath commanded us to present. If we put off God with a shell, he will put us off with a husk. How can we expect his heart, when we do not give him ours? or hope for the blessing needful for us, when we render not the glory due to him? It cannot be an advantageous worship, without spiritual graces; for those are uniting, and union is the ground of all communion.

Reason 5. To have a spiritual worship is God's end in the restoration of the creature; *both in redemption by his Son, and sanctification by the Spirit.* A fitness for spiritual offerings, was the end of the coming of Christ, He should purge them, as gold and silver by fire, a spirit burning up their dross, melting them into a holy compliance with, and submission to God: to what purpose? That they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness; a pure offering from a purified spirit, *Mal.* 3. 3. He came to *bring us to God*, and render us fit to converse with him. The offering of spiritual sacrifices is the end of making any spiritual *habitation*, and a *holy priesthood*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 5. We can no more be worshippers of God, without a spiritual nature, than a man can be a man without human nature. As man was at first cre-

ated for the honour and worship of God; so the design of restoring that image which was defaced by sin, tends to the same end. We are not brought to God by Christ, nor are our services presented to him, if they be without our spirits: would any man that undertakes to bring another to a prince, introduce him in such a garb that he knows is hateful to him? Or bring the clothes of a man stuffed with straw, instead of the person? To come with our bodies before God without our spirits, is contrary to the design of God, in redemption and regeneration. If a carnal worship would have pleased God, a carnal heart would have served his turn, without the expence of his spirit in sanctification. He bestows upon man a spiritual nature, that he may return to him a spiritual service; he enlightens the understanding, that he may have a rational service; and new moulds the will, that he may have a voluntary service. As it is the milk of the word wherewith he feeds us, so it is the service of the word wherewith we must glorify him. So much as there is of confusion in our understanding, so much of levity in our wills, so much of wandering and instability in our affections, so much is abated of the due qualities of the worship of God, and so much we fall short of the end of redemption and sanctification.

Reason 6. A spiritual worship is to be offered to God, because *no worship but that can be acceptable.* We can never be secured of acceptance without it. He being a spirit, nothing but the worship in spirit can be suitable to him; and what is unsuitable, cannot be acceptable. There must be something in us, to make our services capable of being presented by Christ for an actual acceptation. No service is *acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, but as it is a spiritual sacrifice, and offered by a spiritual heart, 1 *Pet.* 2. 5. The sacrifice is first spiritual, before it be acceptable to God by Christ: when it is *an offering in righteousness*, it is then, and only then pleasant, to the Lord, *Mal.* 3. 3, 4. No prince would accept a gift that is unsuitable to his majesty, and below the condition of the person that presents it: would he be pleased with a bottle of water for drink, from one that hath his cellar full of

wine? How unacceptable must that be, that is unsuitable to the Divine Majesty? And what can be more unsuitable, than a withdrawing the operations of our souls from him, in the oblation of our bodies? We as little *glorify God, as God*, when we give him only a corporeal worship; as the heathen did, when they *represented him* in a corporeal shape; one as well as the other denies his spiritual nature: this is worse, for had it been lawful to represent God to the eye, it could not have been done, but by a bodily figure suited to the sense; but since it is necessary to worship him, it cannot be by a corporeal attendance, without the operation of the Spirit. A spiritual frame is more pleasing to God, than the highest exterior adornments; than the greatest gifts, and the highest prophetical illumination. *The glory of the second temple* exceeded the glory of the first: As God accounts the spiritual glory of ordinances most beneficial for us, so our spiritual attendance upon ordinances is most pleasing to him; he that offers the greatest services without it, offers but flesh, *Hos.* 8. 13, *They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of my offerings, but the Lord accepts them not.* Spiritual frames are the soul of religious services; all other carriages without them, are contemptible to this spirit: we can never lay claim to that promise of God, none shall *seek my face in vain:* we affect a vain seeking of him, when we want a due temper of spirit for him: and vain spirits shall have vain returns: it is more contrary to the nature of God's holiness to have communion with such, than it is contrary to the nature of light to have communion with darkness.---But it is now time to make some use of this subject by way of improvement. And, we may learn from hence:—

PART VI.

THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE SUBJECT.

The sad state of those who refuse to worship God—Atheism of it—The guilt of it—Diligence in outward acts of worship not to be rested in—Various points of self-examination to be attended to, in reference to the worship of God—The comfort of spiritual worship, amidst all the corruptions of the heart, the temptations of Satan, and all external interruptions—Exhortations and motives—The evil of wandering affections in worship—Danger of carnal worship—Concluding directions.

I. IT serves for *information.*

If spiritual worship be required by God; *How sad is it* for them that are so far from giving God a spiritual worship, *that they render him no worship at all?* I speak not of the neglect of public, but of private worship, when men present not a devotion to God from one year's end to the other. The words of our Saviour, that we must *worship God in spirit and in truth,* implies that worship is due to him from every one. That is the common impression upon the consciences of all men in the world, if they have not by some constant course in gross sins, hardened their souls, and stifled those natural sentiments. There was never a nation in the world, without some kind of religion; and no religion was ever without some modes, to testify devotion: the heathens had their sacrifices and purifications; and the Jews, by God's order, had their rites, whereby they were to express their allegiance to God.

Consider further, that worship is a duty incumbent upon *all men.* It is a homage mankind owes to God, under the relation wherein he stands obliged to him; it is a prime and immutable justice to own our allegiance to him. It is as unchangeable a truth, that God is to be worshipped, as that God is; he is to be worshipped as God; as Creator: and therefore by all, since he is the Creator of all, the Lord of all, and all are his creatures, and his subjects. Worship is founded upon creation, *Psal.* 100. 2, 3. It is due to God for himself and his own essential excellency, and therefore due from all. It is due upon the account of man's nature; the human rational nature which is the same in all. Whatsoever is due to God upon the account of man's nature, and the natural obligations he hath laid upon man, is due from all men, because they all enjoy the benefits which are proper to their nature. Man in no state was exempted, nor can be exempted from it. In Paradise he had his sabbaths and sacraments; man therefore dissolves the obligation of a reasonable nature, by neglecting the worship of God.

Religion is in the first place to be minded. As soon as Noah came out of the ark, he contrived not a habitation for himself, but an altar for the Lord, to acknowledge him the author of his preservation from the deluge; and wheresoever Abraham came, his first business was to erect an altar, and pay his arrears of gratitude to God, before he ran upon the score for new mercies; he left a testimony of worship wherever he came.

Wholly therefore to neglect it, is *a high degree of atheism.* He that calls not upon God, saith *in his heart there is no God;* and seems to have the sentiments of natural conscience, as to God, stifled in him. It must arise from a conceit that there is no God, or that we are equal to him, adoration not being due from persons of an equal state; or that God is unable, or unwilling to take notice of the adoring acts of his creatures: what is any of these but an undeifying the supreme majesty? When we lay aside all thoughts of paying any homage to him, we are in a fair way opinionatively to deny him,

as much as we practically disown him. Where there is no knowledge of God, that is no acknowledgement of God, a way is opened to all licentiousness; and by degrees the conscience is hardened, and the sense of God is banished. Those forsake God that *forget his holy mountain*; they do not practically own him as the Creator of their souls or bodies. It is the sin of Cain, who turning his back upon worship is said to *go out from the presence of the Lord.** Not to worship him with our spirits, is against his law of creation; not to worship him at all, is against his act of creation; not to worship him in truth, is hypocrisy; not to worship him at all is atheism, whereby we sink ourselves to the lowest state of meanness and misery.

To perform worship to a false God, or to the true God in a false manner, seems to be less a sin, than to live in perpetual neglects of it. Though it be directed to a false object instead of God; yet it is under the notion of a God, and so is an acknowledgment of such a being as God in the world; whereas the total neglect of any worship, is a practical denying of the existence of any supreme majesty.

Whosoever constantly omits a public and private worship, transgresses against an universally received dictate; for all nations have agreed in the common notion of worshipping God, though they have disagreed in the several modes and rites whereby they would testify that adoration. By the worship of God, though superstitious, a veneration and reverence of such a being is maintained in the world; whereas by a total neglect of worship, he is virtually disowned and discarded, if not from his existence, yet from his providence and government of the world: all the mercies we breathe in are denied to flow from him. A foolish worship owns religion, though it defiles it. As if a stranger coming into a country mistakes a subject for the prince, and pays that reverence to the subject, which is due to the prince: though he mistakes the object, yet he owns an authority; or if he pays

* Gen. 4. 16.

any respect to the true prince of that country after the mode of his own, though appearing ridiculous in the place where he is, he owns the authority of the prince; whereas the omission of all respect would be a contempt of majesty. And therefore the judgments of God have been more signal upon the sacrilegious contemners of worship among the heathens, than upon those that were diligent and devout in their false worship; and they generally owned the blessings received, to the preservation of a sense, and worship of a deity among them. Though such a worship be not acceptable to God, and every man is bound to offer God a devotion agreeable to his own mind; yet it is commendable, not as worship, but as it speaks an acknowledgment of such a Being as God, of his power in creation, and his beneficence in his providence.

Then, omissions of worship are to be avoided. Let no man execute that upon himself, which God will pronounce at last as the greatest misery, and bid God depart from him, who will finally hear God command him to depart. Though man hath natural sentiments that God is to be worshipped; yet having an hostility in his nature, he is apt to neglect, or give it him in a slight manner: he therefore sets a particular mark and notice of attention upon the fourth command, *Remember thou keep holy the sabbath-day;* and this command, which concerns his worship, he fortifies with various and weighty reasons. Nor let any neglect worship, because they cannot find their hearts spiritual in it. The further we are from God, the more carnal shall we be. No man can expect heat by distance from the sun beams, or other means of warmth. Though God commanded a circumcised heart in the Jewish services; yet he did not warrant a neglect of the outward testimonies of religion he had appointed; he expected according to his command, that they should offer the sacrifices, and practice the legal purifications; he would have them diligently observed, though he had declared, that he imposed them only for a time. And our Saviour ordered the practice of those positive rites as long as the law remained unrepealed, as in the case of the leper, *Mark* 14. 4. It is injustice to refuse the offering

ourselves to God according to the manner he hath in his wisdom prescribed and required. If spiritual worship be required by God, then,

2. It informs us, *that diligence in outward worship is not to be rested in.* * Men may attend all their days on worship, with an indevout and unrenewed heart, and think to compensate the neglect of the manner, with abundance of the matter of service. Outward expressions are but the badges and liveries of service, not the service itself. As the strength of sin lies in the inward frame of the heart, so the strength of worship in the inward complexion and temper of the soul. What do a thousand services avail, without subduing our carnal affections? What are loud prayers, but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, without divine charity? A pharisaical diligence in outward forms without inward spirit, had no better title vouchsafed by our Saviour, than that of hypocritical. God desires not sacrifices, nor delights in burnt offerings; shadows are not to be offered instead of substance. God required the heart of man for itself; but commanded outward ceremonies, as subservient to inward worship, and goads and spurs unto it: they were never appointed as the substance of religion, but auxiliaries to it. What value had the offering of the human nature of Christ been of, if he had not had a divine nature to qualify him to be the priest? And what is the oblation of our bodies, without a priestly act of the spirit in the presentation of it? Could the Israelites have called themselves worshippers of God according to his order, if they had brought a thousand lambs that had died in the field, or been killed at home? They were to be brought living to the altar; their blood was to be shed at the foot of it. A thousand sacrifices killed without, had not been so valuable as one brought alive to the place of offering: one sound sacrifice is better than a thousand defective ones. As God took no pleasure in the blood of beasts without its relation to the antitype; so he takes no pleasure in the outward rites of worship, without faith in the Redeemer. To

* Daille, melange. des Sermons, Ser. 2.

offer a body with a lifeless spirit, is a sacrilege of the same nature with that of the Israelites when they offered dead beasts. A man without spiritual worship is dead while he worships, though by his diligence in the externals of it, he may, like the *angel of the Church of Sardis, have a name to live. Rev.* 3. 1. What security can we expect from a multitude of dead services? What weak shields are they against the holy eye, and revenging wrath of God? What man, but one out of his wits, would solicit a dead man to be his advocate or champion? Diligence in outward worship is not to be rested in.

II. The necessity of self examination. Let us *try ourselves concerning the manner of our worship.* We are now in the end of the world, and the dregs of time, wherein the apostle predicts, there may be much of a form, and *little of the power of godliness;* and therefore we should search into ourselves, whether it be not thus with us? Whether there be as much reverence in our spirits, as there may be devotion in our countenances and outward carriages.

1. How therefore are our hearts *prepared to worship?* Is our diligence greater, to put our hearts in an adoring posture, than our bodies in a decent garb? Or are we content to have our spirits like a *cage of unclean birds,* while we make clean *the outside of the platter;* this is no better than a pharisaical devotion, and deserves no better name than that of *a whited sepulchre.* Do we take opportunities to excite and quicken our spirits to the performance, and cry aloud with *David, awake, awake my glory?* Are not our hearts asleep, when Christ *stands at the door and knocks;* when we hear the voice of God, *seek my face;* do we answer him with warm resolutions, *thy face Lord we will seek?* Do we comply with spiritual motions? Is there not more of reluctancy, than readiness? Is there a quick rising of the soul in reverence to the motion, as Eglon to Ehud; or a sullen hanging the head at the first approach of it? Or if our hearts seem to be engaged, and on fire; what are the motives that quicken that fire? Is it only the blast of a natural conscience; fear of hell; desires of heaven as abstracted from God? Or is it an

affection to God; an obedient will to please him; longings to enjoy him, as a holy and sanctifying God in his ordinances, as well as a blessed and glorified God in heaven?

What do we expect in our approaches to him? That which may make divine impressions upon us, and more exactly conform us to the divine nature? Or do we design nothing but an empty formality, without any openings of heart to receive the communications, which, according to the nature of the duty, might be conveyed to us? Can this be a spiritual worship? The soul then closely waits upon him, when its *expectation is only from him, Psal. 62. 6.* Are our hearts seasoned with a sense of sin; a sight of our spiritual wants; raised notions of God; glowing affections to him; strong appetite after a spiritual fulness? Do we rouze up our sleepy spirits, and make a covenant with all that is within us to attend upon him? So much as we want of this, so much we come short of spiritual worship. In *Psal. 57. 7, My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed.* David would fix his heart, before he would engage in a praising act of worship; he appeals to God, and that with doubling the expression, as being certain of an inward preparedness. Can we make the same appeals to him for ourselves?

2. *How are our hearts fixed upon him?* How do they *cleave to him* in the duty? Do we resign our spirits to God, and make them an entire holocaust, a whole burnt-offering in his worship? Or do we not willingly admit carnal thoughts to mix themselves with spiritual duties, and fasten our minds to the creature, under pretences of directing them to the Creator? Do we not pass a mere compliment on God, by some superficial act of devotion; while some covetous, envious, ambitious, voluptuous imagination may possess our minds? Do we not invert God's order, and worship a lust instead of God, that should not have the least service, either from our souls or bodies, but with a spiritual disdain be sacrificed to the just indignation of God? How often do we fight against his will, while we cry, hail Master. Instead of crucifying our own thoughts, do we not crucify the Lord

of our lives; is not our outward carriage plausible, and our inward thoughts are carnal and sensual? Do we not often *regard iniquity in our hearts*, in the time of worship? Roll some sin *as a sweet morsel under our tongues*, and taste more sweetness in that, than in God? When we sacrifice, do we not wrap up our souls in communion with some sordid fancy, while we should entwine our spirits about the blessed God? While we have some fear of him, may we not have a love to something else? This is to worship, or swear by the Lord, and by Malchom, *Zeph.* 1. 5. How often does an apish fancy render a service inwardly ridiculous? Under a grave outward posture, are not our thoughts often wandering to the shop, the warehouse, the counting-house, in the space of a short prayer? And we are before God as a Babel, a confusion of internal languages; and this in those parts of worship which are in the right use most agreeable to God; profitable for ourselves; ruinous to the kingdom of sin and Satan, and means to bring us into closer communion with the divine majesty. Can this be a spiritual worship?

3. How do we act our graces *in worship?* Though the instrument be strung, if the strings be not wound up, what melody can be the issue? All readiness and alacrity discover a strength of nature; and a readiness in spirituals, discovers a spirituality in the heart. As unaffecting thoughts of God are not spiritual thoughts, so unaffecting addresses to God are not spiritual addresses. Well then, what awakenings, and elevations of faith and love have we? What strong outflowings of our souls to him? What indignation against sin? What admirations of redeeming grace? How low have we brought our corruptions to the foot-stool of Christ, to be made his conquered enemies? How straitly have we clasped our faith about the cross and the throne of Christ, to become his intimate spouse? Do we in hearing hang upon the lips of Christ; in prayer take hold of God, and will not let him go; in confessions rend the caul of our hearts, and indite our souls before him with a deep humility? Do we act more by a soaring love than a drooping fear? So far

as our spirits are servile, so far they are legal and carnal; so much as they are free and spontaneous, so much they are evangelical and spiritual. As men under the law are subject to the constraint of *bondage all their life-time*, in all their worship; so under the gospel they are under the constraint of love. How then are believing affections exercised, which are always accompanied with holy fear, a fear of his goodness that admits us into his presence, and a fear to offend him in our acts of worship? So much as we have of forced or feeble affection, so much we have of carnality.

4. How do we find our hearts *after worship?* By an after-carriage, we may judge of the spirituality of it. How are we as to *inward strength?* When worship is spiritually performed, grace is more strengthened, corruption more mortified; the soul, like Sampson after his awakening, goes out with renewed strength. As the inward man is renewed day by day, so it is renewed in every act of worship. Every shower makes the grass and fruit grow in good ground where the root is good, and the weeds where the ground is naught. The more prepared the heart is to obedience in other duties after worship, the more evidence there is that it hath been spiritual in the exercise of it. It is the end of God in every dispensation, to *make ready a people prepared for the Lord;** and when the heart is by worship prepared for fresh acts of obedience, and has a more exact watchfulness against the incroachments of sin, then is he accomplishing this end. As carnal men after worship are fruitful in spiritual wickedness; so are spiritual worshippers in spiritual graces; spiritual fruits are a sign of a spiritual frame. When men are more prone to sin after duty, it is a sign there was no communion with God in it, and a greater strength of sin, because such an act is contrary to the end of worship, which is the subduing of sin. It is a sign that medicine hath had a happy effect, which restores a better appetite; and so worship hath been well performed, when we have a stronger inclination to other

* Lev. 1. 17.

acts pleasing to God, and a more sensible distaste of those temptations we too much relished before. It is a sign of a good concoction, when there is a greater strength in the vitals of religion, a more eager desire to know God. When Moses had been praying to God, and prevailed with him; he puts up a higher request, to *behold his glory.* When the appetite stands strong to fuller discoveries of God, it is a sign there hath been spiritual converse with him.

How is it especially as to *humility?* The pharisee's worship was without dispute, carnal; and we find them not more humble after all their devotions, but over-grown with more weeds of spiritual pride; they performed them as their *righteousness.* What men dare plead before God in his day, they plead before him in their hearts, in their day; but this men will do at the day of judgment, *we have prophesied in thy name,* &c. *Mat.* 7. 11. They shew what tincture their services left upon their spirits; that which excludes them from any acceptation at the last day, excludes them from any estimation of being spiritual in this day. The carnal worshippers charge God with injustice in not rewarding them, and claim an acceptation as a compensation due to them, *Isa.* 58. 3, *Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge?* A spiritual worshipper looks upon his duties with shame, as well as he doth upon his sins with confusion, and implores the mercy of God for the one as well as the other. In the 143d Psalm, ver. 2, David, after his supplications, begs of God not to enter into judgment with him, and acknowledges any answer that God should give him, as a fruit of his faithfulness to his promise, and not the merit of his worship. *In thy faithfulness answer me,* &c. *Psal.* 143. 2. Whatsoever springs from a gracious principle, and is the breath of the spirit, leaves a man more humble; whereas that which proceeds from nature, hath the true proud blood of nature running in the veins of it. The breathing of the divine Spirit is in every thing to conform us to our Redeemer; that being the main work of his office, is his work in every particular christian act influenced by him.

Now Jesus Christ in all his actions was an exact pattern of humility. After the institution and celebration of the supper, a special act of worship in the church; though he had a sense of all the authority his Father had given him, yet he *humbles himself to wash his disciples' feet.* And after his sublime prayer, *John* 17, *he humbles himself to the death, and offers himself* to his murderers, because of his Father's pleasure, *John* 18. 1. What is the end of God in appointing worship, is the end of a spiritual heart in offering it; not his own exaltation but God's glory. Glorifying the name of God, is the fruit of that evangelical worship the Gentiles were in time to give to God, *Psal.* 86. 9, *All nations which thou hast made, shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name.* Let us examine then what debasing ourselves there is in a sense of our own vileness, and distance from so glorious a spirit. Self-denial is the heart of all gospel-grace. Evangelical spiritual worship cannot be without the ingredient of the main evangelical principle.

What delight is there after it? What pleasure is there, and what is the object of that pleasure? Is it communion we have had with God, or a fluency in ourselves. Is it something which hath touched our hearts, or pleased our fancies? As the strength of sin is known by the delightful thoughts of it after the commission, so is the spirituality of duty, by the object of our delightful remembrance after the performance. It was a sign David was spiritual in the worship of God in the tabernacle, when he enjoyed it, because he longed for the spiritual part of it, when he was exiled from it. His desires were not only for liberty to revisit the tabernacle, but to see the *power and glory of God in the sanctuary,* as he had seen it before: His desires for it could not have been so ardent, if his reflection upon what had passed, had not been delightful; nor could his soul be poured out in him for the want of such opportunities, if the remembrance of the converse he had had with God, had not been accompanied with a delightful relish. *Psal.* 63. 2. & 42. 4.

III. This subject may be further improved by way of encouragement. And it is very comfortable to consider, that the smallest worship with the heart and spirit, flowing from a principle of grace, is more acceptable than the most pompous veneration; yea, if the oblation were as precious as the whole circuit of heaven and earth without it. That God, that values a *cup of cold water given to any as his disciple*, will value a sincere service above a costly sacrifice. God hath his eye upon them that honour his nature; he would not *seek such to worship him*, if he did not intend to accept such a worship from them: when we therefore invoke him, and praise him, which are the prime parts of religion; he will receive it as a sweet savour from us, and overlook infirmities mixed with the graces. The great matter of discomfort, and that which makes us question the spirituality of worship, is the *many rovings of our spirits after other things.* For answer to which,

(1.) *It is to be confessed, that these evils are natural to us.* Who is free from them? We bear in our own bosom a nest of turbulent thoughts, which like busy gnats will be buzzing about us, while we are in our most spiritual frames. Many enemies lurk in a man's heart, as in a close and covert wood, and scarce discover themselves, but at our solemn worship. No duty so holy, no worship so spiritual, that can wholly privilege us from them; they will disturb us in our most weighty employments, that, as God said to Cain, sin lies at the door, and enters in, and makes strange confusion in our souls. As it is said of wicked men, *Eccles.* 5. 12, *they cannot sleep* for multitude of thoughts; so it may be of many a good man; he cannot worship for multitude of thoughts: there will be more of this in our religious, than natural employments; it is natural to man. Some therefore think, the bells tied to Aaron's garments between the Pomegranates were to warn the people, and recal their fugitive minds to the present service, when they heard the sound of them, upon the least motion of the high priest. *The fowls came down upon* the sacrifice of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and he had to *drive them away,*

Gen. 15. 11. Zachariah himself was drowsy in the midst of his visions, which being more amazing, might cause a heavenly intentness, *Zech.* 4. 1, *The angel that talked with me, came again and awaked me, as a man is awaked out of sleep.* He had been roused up before, but he was ready to drop down again; his heart was gone till the angel roused him. We may complain of such imaginations, as *Jeremiah* doth of the enemies of the Jews, *Lam.* 4. 19, *Our persecutors are swifter than eagles;* they light upon us with as much speed, as eagles upon a carcase; they pursue us upon the mountain of divine institution, and they lay wait for us in the wilderness, in our retired addresses to God. And this will be so while,

There is natural corruption in us. There are in a godly man two contrary principles, flesh and spirit, which endeavour to hinder one another's acts, and are always stirring up the offensive or defensive part. There is a *body of death* continually exhaling its noisome vapours; it is a body of death in our worship, as well as in our natures; it breaks our resolutions asunder; it hinders us in doing good and contradicts our wills in the stirring up evil. This corruption being seated in all the faculties, and a constant domestic in them, has the greater opportunity to trouble us, since it is by those faculties that we spiritually transact with God; and it stirs more in the time of religious exercises, though it be in part mortified: as a wounded beast, though tired, will rage and strive to its utmost, when about to receive a blow from the hand of its destroyer. All duties of worship tend to the wounding of corruption; and it is no wonder to feel the striving of sin to defend itself, and offend us, when we have our arms in our hands to mortify it, that the blow may be diverted which is directed against it.

The apostles had aspiring thoughts; and being persuaded of an earthly kingdom, expected much grandeur in it: and though we find some appearance of it at other times; as when they were casting out devils, and gave an account of it to their master, he gives them a kind of a check, *Luke* 10. 20, intimating that there was some kind of evil in their rejoicing upon that account: yet this ne-

ver swelled so high, as to break out into a quarrel who should be greatest, until they had the most solemn ordinance, the Lord's supper to quell it, *Luke* 22. 24. Our corruption is like lime, which discovers not its fire by any smoke or heat, till you cast water, the enemy of fire, upon it: neither doth our natural corruption rage so much, as when we are using means to quench and destroy it.

Thus it will be with us, *while there is a devil, and we are in his precinct.* As he accuseth us to God, so he disturbs us in ourselves: he is a bold spirit, and loves to intrude himself when we are conversing with God. We read, that when the angels presented themselves before God, Satan came among them, *Job* 1. 6. Motions from Satan will thrust themselves in with our most raised and angelical frames; he loves to take off the ardour of our spirits from God; he acts but after his old manner; he from the first envied God an obedience from man, and envied man the felicity of communion with God; he is unwilling God should have the honour of worship, and that we should have the fruit of it; he hath himself lost it, and therefore is unwilling we should enjoy it; and being subtle, he knows how to make impressions upon us suitable to our inbred corruptions, and assaults us in the weakest part. He knows all the avenues to the heart, and being a spirit, he wants not a power to dart his temptations upon our minds; and being a spirit, and therefore active and nimble, he can shoot those darts faster than our weakness can beat them off. He is diligent also, and watcheth for his prey, and seeks to devour our services as well as our souls, and snatch our best enjoyments from us: we know he mixed himself with our Saviour's retirements in the wilderness, and endeavoured to disturb his holy converse with his Father in the preparation to his mediatory work.

Satan imitates the spirit in the office of a remembrancer: as the Spirit brings good thoughts and divine promises to mind, to quicken our worship; so the devil brings evil things to mind, and endeavours to fasten them in our souls to disturb us: and though all the foolish starts we have in worship are not purely his issue; yet being of kin

to him, he makes use of them to tear the service in pieces. And both those distractions which arise from our own corruption, and from Satan, are most rife in worship, when we are under some pressing affliction. This seems to be David's case, *Psal.* 86, when in ver. 11, he prays God to *unite his heart to fear* and worship *his name*; he seems to be under some affliction, or fear of his enemies. "Oh free me from those distractions of spirit, and those passions which arise in my soul, upon considering the designs of my enemies against me, and press upon me in my addresses to thee, and attendances on thee." Job also in his affliction complains, *chap.* 17. 11, *That his purposes were broken off:* He could not make an even thread of thoughts and resolutions; they were frequently snapped asunder, like rotten thread when one is winding it up. Though these things are a sign of weakness of grace, or some obstructions in the acting of strong grace; yet they are not always evidences of a want of grace: what ariseth from our own corruption, is to be matter of humiliation and resistance; what ariseth from Satan, should rouse our minds to a noble conquest of them. If the apostle did comfort himself with his disapproving of what rose from the natural spring of sin within him, with his consent to the law, and dissent from his lust; and charges it not upon himself, but upon the sin that dwelt in him, with which he had broken off the former league, and was resolved never to enter into amity with it: by the same reason we may comfort ourselves, if such thoughts are undelighted in, and alienate not our hearts from the worship of God by all their busy intrusions to interrupt us.

(2.) *These distractions (not allowed) may be occasions by an holy improvement to make our hearts more spiritual after worship, though they disturb us in it:* by answering those ends for which we may suppose God permits them to invade us. And that is,

1. *When they are occasions to humble us,*

For our carriage in the particular worship. There is nothing so dangerous as spiritual pride; it deprived devils and men of the presence of God, and will hinder us of the influence of God. If we had had raised and uninterrupt-

ed motions in worship, we should be apt to be lifted up; and the devil stands ready to tempt us to self confidence. You know how it was with Paul; his *buffetings* were occasions to render him more spiritual than his *raptures*, because more humble. God suffers those wanderings, starts, and distractions to prevent our spiritual pride, which is as a worm at the root of spiritual worship, and reminds us of the light frame of our spirits, how easily they are carried away; as he sends sickness to put us in mind of the shortness of life, and how easily it is lost. God would make us ashamed of ourselves in his presence; that we may own, that what is good in any duty, is merely from his grace, and not from ourselves; that with Paul we may cry out, *By grace we are what we are*, and by grace we do what we do; and that we may be hereby made sensible that God can always find something in our exactest worship, as a ground of denying us the successful fruit of it. If we cannot stand upon our duties for salvation, if they are such as to make us out of love with any righteousness of our own, if we mourn for them as our sins and greatest afflictions; then we have attained that brokenness which is a choice ingredient in a spiritual sacrifice: though we have been disturbed by them, yet we are not robbed of the success; we may behold an answer of our worship in our humiliation, in spite of all of them.

These distractions may be the occasion of holy improvement when they humble us *for the baseness of our nature*. These unsteady motions help us to discern the sins that breed in our nature. Would any man think he had such an averseness to his Creator and Benefactor such an unsuitableness to him; such an estrangedness from him, were it not for his inspection into his distracted frames? God suffers this to hang over us as a rod of correction, to discover and fetch out the folly of our hearts. Could we imagine our natures so highly contrary to that God who is so infinitely amiable; or that there should be so much folly and madness in the heart, as to draw back from God in those services, which he hath appointed as channels through which to communicate his grace, to convey himself, his love, and goodness to the creature?

If therefore we have a deep sense of, and strong reflections upon, our base nature, and bewail that mass of averseness which lies here, and that fulness of irreverence towards the object of our worship; it is a blessed improvement of our wanderings and diversions. Certainly if any Israelite had brought a lame and unsound lamb to be sacrificed to God, and afterward had bewailed it, and laid open his heart to God in a sensible and humble confession of it; that repentance had been a better sacrifice, and more acceptable in the sight of God, than if he had brought a sound and a living offering.

2. *When they are occasions to make us prize the duties of worship.* When we argue, as rationally we may, that they are of singular use; since our corrupt hearts and a malicious devil chiefly endeavour to hinder us from them; and that we find we have not those wandering thoughts when we are upon worldly business, or upon any sinful design which may dishonour God and wound our souls. This is a sign sin and Satan dislike worship; for he is too subtle a spirit to oppose that which would further his kingdom. As it is an argument, the scripture is the word of God, because the wickedness of the world doth so much oppose it; so it is a ground to believe the profitableness and excellency of worship, because Satan and our own unruly hearts so much interrupt us in it. If, therefore, we make this use of our cross steps in worship, to have a greater value for such duties, more affections to them and desires to be frequent in them; our hearts are growing spiritual, under the weights that would depress them to carnality.

3. *When from hence we are led to admire the graciousness of God,* that he should pity and pardon so many slight addresses to him, and give any gracious returns to us. Though men have foolish ranging every day, and in every duty; yet free grace is so tender as not to punish them; *Gen.* 8. 21, *And the Lord smelt a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not curse the ground for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* It is observable, that this was just after a sacrifice which Noah offered to God, ver. 20. But

probably not without infirmities common to human nature, which may be grounded upon the reason God gives; that though he had destroyed the earth before, because of the *evil of man's imaginations, Gen. 6. 5,* he still found evil imaginations. He doth not say in the heart of Cham, or others of Noah's family; but in man's heart, including Noah also, who had both the judgments of God upon the former world, and the mercy of God in his own preservation before his eyes; yet God saw evil imaginations rooted in the nature of man; and though it were so, yet he would be merciful. If therefore we can, after finding our hearts so vagrant in worship, have real frames of thankfulness that God hath spared us, and be heightened in our admiration at God's giving us any fruit of such a distracted worship; we take advantage from them to be raised into an evangelical frame, which consists in the humble acknowledgments of the grace of God. When David takes a review of those tumultuous passions which had ruffled his mind, and possessed him with unbelieving notions of God in the persons of his prophets; how high doth his soul mount in astonishment and thankfulness to God for his mercy?* Notwithstanding his distrust, God graciously performs his promise, and answers his desire. Then it is he asks, *What shall I render to the Lord?* His heart was more affected for it, because it had been so passionate in former distrusts. It is indeed a ground of wondering at the patience of the Spirit of God, that he should guide our hearts when they are so apt to depart from him; as it is the patience of a master to guide the hand of his scholar, while he mixes his writing with many blots. It is not one or two infirmities the Spirit helps us in, and helps over, but many.† It is a sign of a spiritual heart, when he can bless God for the renewing and kindling his affections, in the midst of so many incursions from Satan to the contrary, and the readiness of the heart too much to comply with them.

4. *When we take occasion from thence to prize the mediation of Christ.* The more distractions disturb us, the

* Psal 116. 11 12. † Rom. 8. 26.

more need we should see of going to a Saviour by faith. One part of his office is to stand between us and the infirmities of our worship. As he is an *advocate*, he presents our services, and pleads for them and us; for the sins of our duties, as well as for our other sins, 1 *John* 2. 1. Jesus Christ is an high-priest, appointed by God to take away the *iniquities of our holy things*, which was typified by Aaron's plate upon his mitre, *Exod.* 28. 36. 38. Were there no such *iniquities*, we should think our worship might merit acceptance with God upon its own account: but if we behold our own weakness, that not a tear, a groan, a sigh, is so pure, but must have Christ to make it acceptable, that there is no worship without those blemishes; and upon this, throw all our services into the arms of Christ for acceptance, and solicit him to put his merits in the front, to make our cyphers appear valuable; it is a spiritual act, the design of God in the gospel being to advance the honour and mediation of his Son. This is a spiritual and evangelical act, which answers the evangelical design. The design of Satan and our own corruption is defeated, when those interruptions make us run swifter, and take faster hold on the high-priest, who is to present our worship to God; and our own souls receive comfort thereby. Christ had temptations in his wilderness retirement; that from an experimental knowledge, he might be able more *compassionately to to succour us;* we have such assaults in our retired worship especially, that we may be able more highly to value him and his mediation.

(3.) *Let us not therefore be discouraged by those interruptions of our hearts.*

1. *If we find in ourselves a strong resistance of them.* The flesh will be lusting; that cannot be hindered; yet if we do not fulfil the lusts of it, rise up at its command, and go about its work, we may be said to walk in the Spirit. *Gal.* 5. 16, 17, *We walk in the Spirit*, if we *fulfil not the lusts of the flesh*, though there be a lusting of the flesh against the spirit; so we worship in the spirit, though there be carnal thoughts arising, if we do not fulfil them; though the stirring of them discovers some

contrariety in us to God, yet the resistance manifests, that there is a principle of contrariety in us to them; that as there is something of the flesh that lusts against the spirit, so there is something of the spirit in worship which lusts against the flesh: we must take heed of omitting worship, because of such inroads. If our spirits are made more lively and vigorous against them; if those cold vapours which have risen from our hearts, make us like a spring in the midst of the cold earth, more warm; there is in this case more reason for us to bless God, than to be discouraged. God looks upon it as the disease, not the wilfulness of our nature; as the weakness of the flesh, not the willingness of the spirit. If we would shut the door upon them, it seems they are unwelcome company: men do not use to lock their doors upon those they love; if they break in and disturb us with their impertinences, we need not be discomforted, unless we give them a share in our affections, and turn our back upon God to entertain them: if their presence makes us sad, their flight would make us joyful.

2. If we find ourselves excited to a stricter *watch over our hearts against them.* As travellers will be careful when they come to places where they have been robbed before, that they be not so easily surprized again. We should not only lament when we have had such foolish imaginations in worship breaking in upon us, but also bless God that we have had no more, since we have hearts so fruitful of evil thoughts. We should give God the glory when we find our hearts preserved from these intruders, and not boast of ourselves, but return him our praise for the guard he kept over us to preserve us from them. Let us not be discomforted; for as the greatness of our sins upon our turning to God is no hinderance to our justification, because it does not depend upon our conversion as the meritorious cause, but upon the infinite value of our Saviour's satisfaction, which reaches the greatest sins as well as the least; so the multitude of our bewailed distractions in worship are not a hinderance to our acceptation, because of the uncontroulable power of Christ's intercession.

Use IV. Is for exhortation. Since spiritual worship is due to God, and he seeks such to worship him, how much should we endeavour to satisfy the desire and order of God, and act *conformable to the law of our creation* and the *love of redemption?* Our end must be the same in worship which was God's end in creation and redemption; to glorify his name, set forth his perfections, and be rendered fit as creatures and redeemed ones to partake of that grace which is the fruit of worship. An evangelical dispensation requires a spiritual homage; to neglect therefore either the matter or manner of gospel duties, is to put a slight upon gospel privileges. The manner of duty is ever of more value than the matter; the scarlet dye is more precious than the cloth that bears it. God respects more the *disposition of the sacrificer* than the *multitude of the sacrifices.* * The solemn feasts appointed by God, were but dung, as managed by the Jews, *Mal.* 2. 3. The heart is often welcome without the body, but the body never without the heart; the inward acts of the spirit require nothing from without to constitute them good in themselves; but the outward acts of devotion require inward acts to render them savoury to God. As the goodness of outward acts consists not in the acts themselves, so the acceptableness of them results not from the acts themselves, but from the inward frame animating and quickening those acts, as blood and spirits running through the veins of a duty to make it a living service in the sight of God. Imperfections in worship hinder not God's acceptation of it, if the heart spirited by grace be there to make it a sweet savour. The stench of burning flesh and fat in the legal sacrifices might render them noisome to the outward senses; but God smelt a sweet savour in them, *as they respected Christ.* When the heart and spirit are offered up to God, it may be a savoury duty, though attended with unsavoury imperfections. But a thousand sacrifices without faith, a thousand spiritual duties with habitual carnality, are abomination with God.

* Μαλλον τυ δαιμονιον προς τὸ τῶν φυοντων ἦθος ἢ τῶν θυομενων πληθος. Porphyr. de Abstinentia.

The heart must be purged, as the temple was by our Saviour, of the thieves that would rob God of his due worship. Antiquity had some temples, wherein it was a crime to bring any gold; therefore those that came to worship laid their gold aside, before they went into the temple. We should lay aside our worldly and trading thoughts before we come to worship, *Isa.* 26. 9, *With my spirit within me will I seek thee early.* Let not our minds be roving abroad, and exiled from God and themselves. It will be thus when the *desire of our soul is to his name and the remembrance of him.* When he hath given so great and admirable a gift, as that of his Son, in whom are all things necessary to salvation, righteousness, peace, and pardon of sin, we should keep up the remembrance of his name in worship with the closest unitedness of heart, and the most spiritual affections. The motion of the Spirit is the first act in religion, to this we are always indebted. The devil requires the spirit of his votaries; should God have less than the devil?—But we attend to some of the *motives* which enforce this exhortation.

First, Not to give God our spirit is a great sin. It is a mockery of God, not worship; contempt, not adoration, whatever our outward fervency or protestations may be.* Every alienation of our hearts from him is a real scorn put upon him: The acts of the soul are real, and more the acts of the man than the acts of the body; because they are the acts of the choicest part of man, and of that which is the first spring of all bodily motions; it is the λόγος ἐνδιαθετος, the internal speech whereby we must speak with God: to give him therefore only an external of worship without the life of it, is taking his name in vain: we mock him, when we mind not what we are speaking to him, or what he is speaking to us; when the motions of our hearts are contrary to the motions of our tongues; when we do any thing before him slovenly, impudently, or rashly. As in music, it is absurd to sing one tune and play another; so it is a foul thing, to tell God one thing

* Non valet protestatio contra factum, is a rule in the civil law.

with our lips, and think another with our hearts; it is a sin like that the apostle chargeth the heathens with, *Rom.* 1. 28, *They like not to retain God in their knowledge;* they loathe the duties of religion and are never at rest till they have done with them, and rid themselves of the thoughts of God, which are as unwelcome and troublesome guests to them. When men behave themselves in the sight of God, as if God were not God; they do not only defame him, but deny him, and violate the unchangeable perfections of the divine nature.

1. *It is against the majesty of God,* when we have not awful thoughts of that great majesty whom we address; when our souls cleave not to him when we petition him in prayer, or when he gives out his orders in his word. Solomon adviseth us to *keep our foot when we go to the house of God, Eccles.* 5. 1. Our affections should be steady, because *God is in heaven,* and we upon earth. He is a God of majesty; earthly frames are unsuitable to his worship and character. We would not bring our mean servants into a prince's presence chamber; yet we bring not only our worldly, but our prophane affections into God's presence; we give in this case, those services to God, which our governor would think unworthy of him, *Mal.* 1. 8. The more excellent and glorious God is, the greater contempt of him it is to suffer such foolish affections to be competitors with him for our hearts. It is a scorn put upon him to converse with a creature while we are dealing with him; but a greater to converse in our thoughts and fancies with some sordid lust, which is most hateful to him: and the more aggravation it attracts, in that we are to apprehend him the most glorious object sitting upon his throne in time of worship, and ourselves standing as vile creatures before him, supplicating for our lives, and the conveyances of grace and mercy to our souls: as if a grand mutineer, instead of humbly begging the pardon of his offended prince, should present his petition not only scribbled and blotted, but defiled. It is unbecoming the majesty both of God and the worship itself, to present him with a shadow instead of substance, and bring a world of impure affections, and

ridiculous toys before him, and worship with indisposed and heedless souls. *Mal.* 1. 14. He is a *great King*, therefore address to him with fear and reverence.

2. *It is against the life of God.* Is a dead worship proportioned to a living God? The separation of heavenly affections from our souls before God, makes them as much a carcase in his sight, as the divorce of the soul makes the body a carcase; when the affections are separated, worship is no longer worship, but a dead offering, a lifeless bulk; for the essence and spirit of worship is departed: though the soul be present with the body in a way of information, yet it is not present in a way of affection, and this is the worst; for it is not the separation of the soul from informing, that doth separate a man from God, but the removal of our affections from him. If a man pretend application to God, and sleep and snore all the time; without question such a one did not worship. In a careless worship, the heart is morally dead while the eyes are open: *The heart of the spouse, Cant.* 5. 2, *awaked* while her eyes slept; and our hearts on the contrary sleep while our eyes awake. Our blessed Saviour hath died to *purge our consciences from dead works* and dead frames, that we may serve the *living God, Heb.* 9, 14. Serve him as a God of life. David's soul cried and fainted for God under this consideration, *Psal.* 42. 2. But to present our bodies without our spirits, is such usage of God, that implies he is a dead image, not worthy of any but a dead and heartless service: like one of those idols the Psalmist speaks of, that have *eyes and see not, ears and hear not, Psal.* 115. 5. Though it be not an objective idolatry, because the worship is directed to the true God; yet I may call it a subjective idolatry, in regard of the frame, fit only to be presented to some senseless stock. We intimate God to be no better than an idol, and to have no more knowledge of us, than an idol can have: if we did believe him to be the living God, we durst not come before him with services so unsuitable to him, and reproaches of him.

3. *It is against the infiniteness of God.* We should

worship God with those boundless affections which bear upon them a shadow or image of his infiniteness; such are the desires of the soul which know no limits, but start out beyond whatsoever enjoyment the heart of man possesses. No creeping creature was to be offered to God in sacrifice; but such as had legs to run, or wings to fly. For us to come before God with a light creeping frame, is to worship him with the lowest finite affections; as though any thing, though never so mean or torn, might satisfy an infinite being; as though a poor shallow creature could give enough to God without giving him the heart, when indeed we cannot give him a worship proportionable to his infiniteness, did our hearts swell as large as heaven in our desires for him in every act of our duties.

4. *It is against the spirituality of God.* God being a Spirit, calls for worship in spirit; to withhold this from him, implies that he is some gross corporeal matter. As a *spirit, he looks for the heart*; a wrestling heart in prayer; a trembling heart in the word.* To bring nothing but the body when we come to a spiritual God to ask spiritual benefits, to wait for spiritual communications, which can only be dispensed to us in a spiritual manner, is unsuitable to the spiritual nature of God. A mere carnal service implicitly denies his spirituality, which requires of us higher engagements than mere corporeal ones. Worship should be rational, not an imaginative service, wherein is required the activity of our noblest faculties; and our fancy ought to have no share in it, but in subserviency to the more spiritual part of our soul.

5. *It is against the supremacy of God.* As God is one, the only sovereign; so our hearts should be one, cleaving wholly to him, and undivided from him. In pretending to deal with him, we acknowledge his deity and sovereignty; but in withholding our choicest faculties and affections from him, and the starting of our minds to vain objects, we intimate their equality with God, and their right as well as his to our hearts and affec-

* Isa. 66. 2.

tions, and that other things are superior to God; they are true sovereigns that engross our hearts. If a man were addressing himself to a prince, and should in an instant turn his back upon him, upon a beck or nod from some inconsiderable person, is it not an evidence, that that person that invited him away, hath a greater sovereignty over him, than that prince to whom he was applying himself? And do we not discard God's absolute dominion over us, when at the least beck of a corrupt inclination, we can dispose of our hearts to it, and alienate them from God? as they in *Ezek.* 33. 32, left the service of God for the service of their covetousness; which evidenced that they owned the authority of sin more than the authority of God. This is not to serve God as our Lord and absolute master, but to make God serve our turn, and submit his sovereignty to the supremacy of some unworthy affection. The creature is preferred before the Creator, when the heart runs most upon it in time of religious worship, and our own carnal interest swallows up the affections that are due to God. It is *an idol set up in the heart*, in his solemn presence, and attracts that devotion to itself, which we only owe to our sovereign Lord; and the more base and contemptible that is to which the spirit is devoted, the more contempt there is of God's dominion. The kiss of Judas, though he said, *Hail Master*, was no act of worship, or an owning his Master's authority; but connected with the satisfaction of his covetousness in the betraying of him.

6. *It is against the wisdom of God.* God as a God of order, has put earthly things in subordination to heavenly; and we by this unworthy carriage invert this order, and put heavenly things in subordination to earthly; in placing mean and low things in our hearts, and bringing them so placed into God's presence, which his wisdom at the creation put under our feet. A service without spiritual affections, is the *sacrifice of fools, Eccles.* 5. 1, which have lost their understandings. A foolish spirit is very unsuitable to an infinitely wise God; well may God say of such a one, as Achish of David who

seemed mad, *Why have you brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?* 1 *Sam.* 21. 15.

7. *It is against the omniscience of God.* To carry it fair without and impertinently within, is as though God had not an all-seeing eye that could pierce into the heart, and understand every motion of the inward faculties; as though God were easily cheated with an outward fawning service. What is such a carriage, but a design to deceive God; when with Herod we pretend to worship Christ, and intend to destroy all the motions of Christ in our souls? A heedless spirit, an estrangement of our souls, a giving the reins to them to run out from the presence of God to see every *reed shaken with the wind*; is to deny him to be a searcher of hearts; as though he could not look through us to the darkness and remoteness of our minds, but were an ignorant God who might be put off with the worst as well as the best in our flock. If we did really believe there were a God of infinite knowledge, who saw our frames, and whether we came dressed with *wedding garments* suitable to the duties we are about to perform; should we put him off with such trivial stuff, without any reverence of his majesty?

It is against the holiness of God. To alienate our spirits, is to offend him while we pretend to worship him; though we may be mighty officious in the external part, yet our base and carnal affections make all our worship but as a noisome heap, *Prov.* 21. 27, *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: How much more when he brings it with a wicked mind?* A putrified carcase under the law, had not been so great an affront to the holiness of God, as a frothy unmelted heart, and a wanton fancy in a time of worship. God is so holy, that if we could offer the worship of angels, and the quintessence of our souls in his service, it would be beneath his infinite purity; how unworthy then are they of him, when they are presented not only without the sense of our uncleanness, but sullied with the fumes and exhalations of our corrupt affections, which are as so many spots upon our duties,

contrary to the purity of the divine nature? Is not this an unworthy conceit of God, and injurious to his infinite holiness?

9. *It is against the love and kindness of God.* It is a condescension in God to admit an *earthly,* sinful creature to worship him, when he hath myriads of angels to attend him in his court and celebrate his praise. To admit man to be an attendant on him, and a partner with angels, is a wonderful favour, *Psa. 5. 7, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercies.* When the blessed God is so gracious as to give us access to his majesty, do we not undervalue his kindness when we deal insincerely or indevoutly with him, and deny him the choicest part of ourselves? It is a contempt of his sovereignty, as our spirits are due to him by nature; a contempt of his goodness, as our spirits are due to him by gratitude? How abusive a carriage is it to make use of his mercy to encourage our impudence, that should excite our fear and reverence? How unworthy would it be for an indigent debtor to bring to his indulgent creditor an empty purse instead of payment? When God holds out his golden sceptre to encourage our approaches to him; stands ready to give us the pardon of sin and full felicity, the best things he hath; is it a fit requital of his kindness, to give him a formal outside only, a shadow of religion; to have the heart overswayed with other thoughts and affections; as if all his proffers were so contemptible, as to deserve only a slight at our hands? It is a contempt of the love and kindness of God.

10. *It is against the sufficiency and fulness of God.* When we give God our bodies and the creature our spirits, it intimates a conceit, that there is more content to be had in the creature than in *God blessed for ever;* that the waters in the cistern are sweeter than those in the fountain. Is not this practically giving God the lie, and denying those promises wherein he hath declared the satisfaction he can give to the Spirit, as he is the *God of the spirits of all flesh?* If we imagined the excellency and loveliness of God were worthy to be the ultimate object of our affections, the heart would attend more closely

upon him, and be terminated in him; did we believe God to be all-sufficient, full of grace and goodness, a tender Father, not willing to forsake his own; willing, as well as able, to supply their wants; the heart would not so coldly attend upon him, and would not upon every impertinency be diverted from him. There is much of a wrong notion of God, and a predominancy of the world, above him in the heart, when we can more savourily relish the thoughts of low inferior things than heavenly, and let our spirits upon every trifling occasion be fugitives from him. It is a testimony that we make not God our chiefest good. If apprehensions of his excellency possessed our souls, they would be fastened on him, and united to him; we should not listen to that rabble of foolish thoughts that steal our hearts so often from him. Were our breathings after God as strong as the pantings of the hart after the water brooks, we should be like that creature not diverted in our course by every puddle. Were God the predominant satisfactory object, he would carry our whole soul along with him. When our spirits readily retreat from God in worship upon every giddy motion, it is a kind of repentance that ever we came near him, and implies that there is a fuller satisfaction, and more attractive excellency, in that which so easily diverts us, than in that God to whose worship we pretended to address ourselves. It is as if, when we were petitioning a prince, we should turn and make request to one of his guard, as though so mean a person were more able to give us the boon we want, than the sovereign.

Secondly, To have our spirits carried off from God in worship, is a bad sign. It was not so in innocence. The heart of Adam could cleave to God; the law of God was engraven there, and he could apply himself to the fulfilling of it without any confusion; there was no folly, no vanity in his mind, no independence in his thoughts, no duty was his burden; for there was in him a proneness to, and delight in, all the duties of worship. It is the fall that hath distempered us; and the more unwieldiness there is in our spirits, the more carnal our affections are in worship, the more evidence there is of the strength of that revolted state.

1. It argues *much corruption in the heart.* As by the eructations of the stomach, we may judge that all is not right as to the state of our health, so by the inordinate motions of our minds and hearts, we may judge of the weakness of its complexion. A strength of sin is evidenced by the eruptions and ebullitions of it in worship, when they are more sudden, numerous, and vigorous than the motions of grace. When the heart is apt, like tinder, to catch fire from Satan, it is a sign of much combustible matter suitable to his temptation. Were not corruption strong, the soul could not turn so easily from God when it is in his presence, and hath advantageous opportunity to create a fear and awe of God in it: such base fruit could not sprout up so suddenly, were there not much sap and juice in the root of sin. What communion with a living root can be evidenced without exercises of an inward life? That spirit which is a well of living waters in a gracious heart, will be especially springing up when it is before God.

2. It shews *much affection to earthly things, and little to heavenly.* There must needs be an inordinate affection to earthly things, when upon every slight solicitation we can part with God, and turn the back upon a service glorious for him, and advantageous for ourselves, to wed our hearts to some idle fancy that signifies nothing. How can we be said to entertain God in our affections, when we give him not the precedence in our understandings, but let every trifle justle the sense of God out of our minds? Were our hearts fully determined to spiritual things, such vanities could not seat themselves in our understandings, and divide our spirits from God. Were our hearts balanced with a love to God, the world could never steal our hearts so much from his worship, but his worship would draw our hearts to it. It shews a base neutrality in the greatest of all concerns; a *halting between God and Baal;* a contrariety between affection and conscience, when natural conscience presses a man to the duties of worship, and his other affections draw him to carnal objects, and make him slight that whereby he may honour God. God argues the profaneness of the Jews'

hearts, from the wickedness they brought into his house, and acted there, *Jer.* 23, *Yea in my house*, that is, my worship, *I found their wickedness*, saith the Lord. Carnality in worship is a kind of idolatrous frame; when the heart is renewed, *idols are cast to the moles and the bats, Isa.* 2. 20.

3. It shews *much hypocrisy to have our spirits off from God.* The mouth speaks, and the carriage pretends what the heart doth not think; there is a dissent of the heart from the pretence of the body. Instability is a sure sign of hypocrisy. *Double thoughts* argue *a double heart.* The wicked are compared to *chaff*, for the uncertain and various motions of their minds, *carried away*, by the least wind of fancy. The least motion of a carnal object diverts the spirit from God, as the scent of carrion doth the raven from the flight it was set upon. The people of God are called God's spouse, and God calls himself their husband; whereby is noted, the most intimate union of the soul with God, and that there ought to be the highest love and affection to him, and faithfulness in his worship; but when the heart starts from him in worship, it is a sign of the unsteadfastness of it with God, and a disrelish of any communion with him; it is as God complains of the Israelites, a *going a whoring after our own imaginations.* As grace respects God as the object of worship, so it looks most upon God in approaching to him. Where there is a likeness and love, there is a desire of converse and intimacy; if there be no spiritual cleaving to God in our worship, it is a sign there is no likeness to him; no true sense of him; no renewed image of God in us. Every living image will move strongly to join itself with its original copy, and be glad with Jacob, to sit steadily in those chariots that shall convey him to his beloved Joseph.

Thirdly.—Consider *the danger of a carnal worship.* By such worship,

1. *We lose the comfort of worship.* The soul is a great gainer when it offers a spiritual worship, and as great a loser when it is unfaithful with God. Treachery and perfidiousness hinder commerce among men; so

does hypocrisy hinder communion with God. God never promised any thing to the carcase but to the spirit of worship. God hath no obligation upon him by any word of his, to reward us with himself, when we perform it not to himself; when we give an outside worship, we have only the outside of an ordinance; we can expect no kernel, when we give God only the shell. He that only touches the outside of the glass, can never be refreshed with the rich cordial within. A cold and lazy formality, will make God to withdraw the light of his countenance, and not shine with any delightful communications upon our souls; but if we come before him with liveliness of affections, and steadiness of heart, he will draw the vail, and cause his glory to display itself before us. An humble praying christian, and a warm affectionate christian in worship, will soon find a God who is delighted with such frames, and cannot long withhold himself from the soul. When our hearts are inflamed with love to him in worship, it is a preparation to some act of love on his part whereby he intends further to gratify us. When John was *in the Spirit on the Lord's day*, that is in spiritual employment, and meditation, and other duties, he had that great revelation of what should happen to the church in all ages: his being in the spirit, intimates his ordinary course on that day, and not any extraordinary act in him, though it was followed with an extraordinary discovery of God to him. When he was thus engaged, *he heard a voice behind him.*

God doth not require of us spirituality in worship to advantage himself, but that we might be prepared to be advantaged by him. If we have a clear and well-disposed eye, it is not a benefit to the sun, but fits us to receive benefits from his beams. Worship is an act that perfects our own souls; they are then most widened by spiritual frames, to receive the influence of divine blessings, as an eye most opened receives the fruit of the sun's light better than the eye that is shut. The communications of God are more or less, according as our spiritual frames are more or less in our worship; God will not give his blessings to unsuitable hearts. What an impure vessel is

a carnal heart for spiritual communication? The chief end of every duty enjoined by God is to have communion with him; and therefore it is called a drawing near to God. It is impossible, therefore, that the outward part of any duty can answer the end of God in his institution. It is not a bodily appearance or gesture whereby men can have communion with God, but by the impressions of the heart, and reflections of the heart upon God. Without this, all the rich streams of grace will run besides us, and the growth of the soul be hindered and impaired. *A diligent hand makes rich,* saith the wise man; a diligent heart in spiritual worship, brings rich incomes to the humble and spiritual soul.

2. *It renders the worship not only unacceptable, but abominable to God.* It makes our gold to become dross; it soils our duties and our souls. A carnal and unsteady frame shews an indifferency of spirit at best; and lukewarmness is as ungrateful to God, as heavy and nauseous meat is to the stomach, *Rev.* 3, 16. As our gracious God overlooks infirmities where intentions are good, and endeavours serious and strong; so he loathes the services where the heart is not right with himself, *Psal.* 66. 118, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.* Lukewarm and indifferent services are offensive to God. The heart seems to loathe God when it starts from him upon every occasion, when it is unwilling to employ itself about, and stick close to him: and can God be pleased with such a frame? The more of the heart and spirit are in any service, the more real goodness there is in it, and the more savoury it is to God; the less of the heart and spirit, the less of the goodness, and the more nauseous to God, who loves righteousness and *truth in the inward parts.* And therefore infinite goodness and holiness cannot but hate worship presented to him with deceitful, carnal, and unsteady affections; they are the profanings of that which should be the habitation of the Spirit. They make the spirit, the seat of duty, as loathsome to God, as the money-changers in the temple were to our Saviour. Having seen the evil of carnal frames, and the necessity and

benefit of spiritual frames; let us for our farther help in the last particular, attend to the following directions.

1. *Keep up spiritual frames out of worship.* To avoid low affections, we must keep our hearts as much as we can in a settled elevation. If we admit unworthy dispositions at one time, we shall not easily be rid of them at another: * as he that would not be bitten by gnats in the night, must keep his windows shut in the day; when they are once entered it is not easy to expel them: in which respect, one adviseth to be such out of worship as we would be in worship. If we mix spiritual affections with our worldly employments, worldly affections will not mingle themselves so easily with our heavenly engagements. If our hearts be spiritual in our outward calling, they will scarce be carnal in our religious service. If *we walk in the spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, Gal.* 5. 15. A spiritual walk in the day will hinder carnality in worship. The fire was to be kept alive upon the altar when sacrifices were not offered, from morning till night, from night till morning, as well as in the time of sacrifice. Spiritual life and vigour out of worship, would render it at its season sweet and easy, and preserve a spontaneity and preparedness to it.

Any thing that unhinges and discomposes our spirits, is inconsistent with religious services, which are to be performed with the greatest sedateness and gravity. All irregular passions disturb the serenity of the spirit, and open the door for Satan, *Eph.* 4. 26. 27, *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil.* Where wrath breaks the lock, the devil will quickly be over the threshold; and though they be allayed, yet they leave the heart some time after, like the sea rolling and swelling after the storm is ceased. Mixture with ill company leaves a tincture upon us in worship. Ephraim's allying himself with the Gentiles, bred an indifference in religion, *Hos.* 7. 8, Ephraim *hath mixed himself with*

* Fitzherbert Pol. in relig. part. 2. cap. 19. § 12.

the people: Ephraim *is a cake not turned:* It will make our hearts, and consequently our services half dough, as well as half baked. These and the like make the holy spirit withdraw himself, and then the soul lies like a wind-bound vessel, and can make no way. When the sun departs from us, it carries its beams away with it; then doth *darkness spread itself over the earth, and the beasts of the forests creep out, Psal.* 104. 20. When the spirit withdraws a while from a good man, it carries away, though not habitual, yet much of the exciting and assisting grace; and then carnal dispositions lift up themselves from the bosom of natural corruption. To be spiritual in worship, we must bar the door at other times against that which is contrary to it: as he that would not be infected with a contagious disease carries some preservative about with him. To this end, be much in secret ejaculations to God, these are the purest flights of the soul, that have more of fervour and less of carnality; they preserve a liveliness in the spirit, and make it more fit to perform solemn stated worship with greater freedom and activity; a constant use of this would make our whole lives, lives of worship. As frequent sinful acts strengthen habits of sin; so frequent religious acts strengthen habits of grace.

2. Excite and exercise particularly love to God, and *dependance* on him. Love is a commanding affection, a uniting grace; it draws all the faculties of the soul to one centre. The soul that loves God, when it hath to do with him, is bound to the beloved object; it can mind nothing else during such impressions. When the affection is set to the worship of God, every thing the soul hath will be bestowed upon it: as David's disposition *was to the temple,* 1 *Chron.* 29. 3. Carnal frames like the fowls, will be lighting upon the sacrifices; but not when it is inflamed; though the scent of the flesh invite them, yet the heat of the fire drives them to their distance. A flaming love will singe the flies that endeavour to interrupt and disturb us. The happiness of heaven consists in a full attraction of the soul to God, by his glori-

ous influence upon it; there will be such a diffusion of his goodness throughout the souls of the blessed, as will unite the affections perfectly to him: these affections which are scattered here, will be there gathered into one flame, moving to him and centering in him: therefore the more of a heavenly frame possesses our affections here, the more settled and uniform will our hearts be in all their motions to God, and operations about him. Excite a dependence on him, *Prov.* 16. 3, *Commit thy works to the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established.* Let us go out in God's strength and not in our own; vain is the help of man in any thing, and vain is the help of the heart: it is through God only *we can do valiantly in* spiritual concerns as well as temporal; the want of this makes but slight impressions upon the spirit.

3. Nourish *right conceptions* of the majesty of God in your minds. Let us consider, that we are drawing to God; the most amiable object, the best of beings, worthy of infinite honour, and highly meriting the highest affections we can give; a God that made the world by a word; that upholds the great frame of heaven and earth; a majesty above the conceptions of angels; who uses not his power to strike us to our deserved punishment, but his love and bounty to allure us; a God that gave all the creatures to serve us, and can make them as much our enemies as he hath now made them our servants. Let us view him in his greatness, and in his goodness, that our hearts may have a true value of the worship of so great a majesty, and count it the most worthy employment with all diligence to attend upon him. When we have a fear of God, it will make our worship serious; when we have joy in God, it will make our worship durable. Our affections will be raised, when we represent God in the most reverential, endearing, and obliging circumstances. We honour the majesty of God, when we consider him with due reverence, according to the greatness and perfection of his works; and in this reverence of his majesty doth worship chiefly consist. Low thoughts of God will make low frames in us before him: if we thought God an

infinite glorious Spirit, how humbly, how believingly we should prostrate ourselves before him, feeling with the Psalmist, when he considers God to be without comparison in the heavens; *to whom none of the sons of the mighty can be likened;* when there was none like to him in strength or faithfulness *round about?* *Psa.* 89. 6, 7, 8. We should have also deep impressions of the omniscience of God; and remember we have to deal with a God that searcheth the heart and trieth the reins; to whom the most secret temper is as visible, as the loudest words are audible; that though man judges by outward expressions, God judges by inward affections. As the law of God regulates the inward frames of the heart; so the eye of God fixes upon the inward intentions of the soul. If God were visibly present with us, should we not approach to him with strong affections; summon our spirits to attend upon him; behave ourselves modestly before him? Let us consider, he is as really present with us, as if he were visible to us; let us therefore preserve a strong sense of the presence of God. No man but one out of his wits, when he were in the presence of a prince, and making a speech to him, would break off at every period, and run after butterflies. Remember, that in worship you are before the Lord, to whom all things are open and naked.

4. Let us take heed of *inordinate desires after the world.* As the world steals away a man's heart from the word, so it doth from all other worship; *it chokes the word;* it stifles all spiritual breathings after God in duty: the edge of the soul is blunted by it, and made too dull for such sublime exercises. The apostle's rule in prayer, when he joins *sobriety with watching unto prayer,* 1 *Pet.* 4. 7, is of concern in all worship, sobriety in the pursuit and use of all worldly things. A man drunk with worldly fumes cannot watch, cannot be heavenly, affectionate, spiritual in service. There is a magnetic force in the earth, to hinder our flights to heaven: birds, when they take their flights from the earth, have more flutterings of their wings, than when they are mounted further in the air,

and got more without the sphere of the earth's attractiveness; the motion of their wings is more steady, that you can scarce perceive them stir; they move like a ship with a full gale. The world is a clog upon the soul, and a bar to spiritual frames: it is as hard to elevate the heart to God amidst the hurry of worldly affairs, as it is difficult to meditate when we are near a great noise of waters falling from a precipice, or in the midst of a volley of muskets. Worldly affections make the heart unfit for such high flights in worship: therefore get your hearts clear from worldly thoughts and desires, if you would be more spiritual in worship.

5 Let us be deeply sensible *of our present wants, and the supplies we may meet with in worship,* Cold affections to the things we would have, will grow cooler: weakness of desire for heavenly communications in worship, will freeze our hearts, and make way for vain and foolish diversions. A beggar that is ready to perish, and knows he is next door to ruin, will not slightly and dully beg an alms; and will not be diverted from his importunity by every slight call, or the moving of an atom in the air. Is it pardon we would have? Let us apprehend the blackness of sin with the aggravations of it, as it respects God; let us be deeply sensible of the want of pardon and worth of mercy, and get our affections into such a frame, as a condemned man would do. Let us consider, that as we are now at the throne of God's grace, we shall shortly be at the bar of God's justice; and if the soul should be forlorn there, how fixedly and earnestly would it plead for mercy? Let us endeavour to stir up the same affections now, which we have seen some dying men have, and which we suppose despairing souls would have done at God's tribunal.* We must be sensible that the life or death of our souls depends upon the spirit of our worship. Would we not be ashamed to be ridiculous in our carriage while we are eating; and shall we not be ashamed to be cold or trifling before God, when the salvation of our souls, as

* Guliel Paris Rhetor. Divin. cap. 26. p. 350. Col. 1.

well as the honour of God, is concerned? If we saw the number of our sins, the eternity of punishment due to them; if we saw an angry and offended judge; if we saw the riches of mercy, the glorious outgoings of God in the sanctuary, the blessings he gives out to men when they spiritually attend upon him; both the one and the other would make us perform our duties humbly, sincerely, earnestly, and affectionately, and wait upon him with our whole souls, to have misery averted and mercy bestowed. Let our sense of this be encouraged by the consideration of our Saviour presenting his merits; with what affection doth he present his merits, his blood shed upon the cross now in heaven? And shall our hearts be cold, and frozen, and unsteady, when his affections are so much concerned? Christ doth not present any man's case and duties without a sense of his wants, and shall we have none of our own? Let us affect our hearts with a sense of what supplies we have met with in former worship. The delightful remembrance of the converse we have had with God, would spiritualize our hearts for the present worship. Had Peter had a view of Christ's glory in the mount, fresh in his thoughts, he would not so easily have turned his back upon his master; nor would the Israelites have been at leisure for their idolatry, had they preserved the sense of the majesty of God discovered in his late thunders from Mount Sinai.

6. If any thing intrudes that may disturb worship, *cast it speedily out*. We cannot hinder Satan and our own corruption from presenting temptations to us, but we may hinder the success of them. We cannot hinder the gnats from buzzing about us, when we are in our business, but we may prevent them from settling upon us. A man that is running on a considerable errand, will shun all unnecessary discourse that may make him forget, or loiter in his business. What though there may be something offered that is good in itself; yet if it hath a tendency to despoil God of his honour, and ourselves of the spiritual intentness in worship, send it away. Those that weed a field of corn, examine not

the nature and particular virtues of the weeds; but consider only how they choke the corn, to which the native juice of the soil is designed. Consider what you are about, and if any thing interpose that may divert you, or cool your affections in your present worship, cast it out.

7. As to private worship, *let us improve the best opportunities and frames.*

When we find our hearts in a more than ordinary spiritual frame, let us look upon it as a call from God to attend him: such impressions and motions are God's voice, inviting us into communion with him in some particular act of worship, and promising success in it. When the psalmist had a secret motion to *seek God's face*, and complied with it, the issue is the encouragement of his heart, which breaks out into an exhortation to others to be of good courage, and wait on the Lord: *Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and he shall strengthen thy heart, wait, I say on the Lord, Psal.* 27, 8, 13, 14. One blow, says Reynolds, will do more on the iron when it is hot, than a hundred when it is cold. Melted metals may be stamped, with any impressions; but once hardened, will with difficulty be brought into the figure we intend.

8. *Let us examine ourselves at the end of every act of worship, and chide ourselves for any carnality we perceive in them.* Let us take a review of them, and examine the reason, why our souls are so low and carnal. As David did of his disquietedness, *Psal.* 42. 5, *Why art thou cast down O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?* If any unworthy frames have surprised us in worship, let us seek them out after; call them to the bar; make an exact scrutiny into the causes of them, that we may prevent their incursions another time; let our pulses beat quick in indignation against them. This would be a repairing what hath been amiss; otherwise they may grow, and clog after worship more than they did a former. Daily examination is an antidote against the temptations of the following day, and constant examination of ourselves after duty, is a preser-

vative against vain encroachments in following duties; and upon the finding them out, let us apply the blood of Christ by faith for our cure, and draw strength from the death of Christ for the conquest of them, and let us also be humbled for them. God lifts up the humble; when we are humbled for our carnal frames in one duty, we shall find ourselves by the grace of God more elevated in the next.

THE

ETERNITY OF GOD.

Psal. 90. 2.

BEFORE THE MOUNTAINS WERE BROUGHT FORTH, OR EVER THOU HADST FORMED THE EARTH AND THE WORLD; EVEN FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING, THOU ART GOD.

PART I.

THE ETERNITY OF GOD DESCRIBED.

Connexion and import of the text—God of an eternal duration—Without beginning—Without end—No succession in God—In his knowledge—In his decrees—God his own eternity—Eternal in all his perfections—The name by which he made himself—Hath life in himself—If not eternal, he could not be immutable—Could not be infinitely perfect—Could not be omnipotent—Could not be the first cause of all things—The eternity of God incommunicable.

THE title of this psalm is a prayer. The author of it Moses. Some think not only this, but the ten following Psalms, were composed by him. The title wherewith he is dignified, is *The Man of God*, as also in *Deut.* 33. 1. One inspired by him, to be his interpreter, and deliver

his oracles; one particularly directed by him: * one who as a servant, was diligently employed in his master's business, and acting for the glory of God: † he was the minister of the old testament, and the prophet of the new.

There are two parts of this psalm. 1. A complaint of *the frailty of man's life in general*, verses 3, 4, 5, 6; ‡and then a particular complaint of *the condition of the church*, ver. 8, 9, 10. 2. A prayer, ver. 12. But before he speaks of the shortness of human life, he fortifies them by the consideration of the refuge they had, and should find, in God, ver. 1. *Lord thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.*

We have had no settled abode in the earth, since the time of Abraham's being called out from Ur of the Chaldees: we have had Canaan in promise, we have it not yet in possession; we have been exposed to the cruelties of an oppressing enemy, and the incommodities of a desert wilderness; we have wanted the fruits of the earth, but not the dews of heaven. *Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.* Abraham was under thy conduct; Isaac and Jacob under thy care: their posterity were multiplied by thee, and that under their oppressions. Thou hast been our shield against dangers, our security in the times of trouble. When we were pursued to the Red-sea, it was not a creature that delivered us; and when we feared the pinching want in the desert, it was no creature rained manna upon us. Thou *hast been our dwelling place;* thou hast kept open house for us, sheltered us against storms, and preserved us from mischief, as a house doth an inhabitant from wind and weather; and that not in one or two, but *in all generations.* Some think an allusion is here made to the ark, to which they were to have recourse in all emergencies. Our refuge and defence hath not been from created things; not from the ark, but from the God of the ark. Observe, God is a perpetual *refuge and security to his people.* His providence is not confined to one generation; it is not one age only that tastes of his bounty and compassion: his eye never yet slept, nor hath

* Coccei in loc. † Austin in loc. ‡ Pareus in loc.

he suffered the little ship of his church to be swallowed up, though it hath been tossed upon the waves: he hath always been an haven to preserve us, a house to secure us; he hath always had compassion to pity us, and power to protect us; he hath had a face to shine, when the world hath had an angry countenance to frown; * He brought Enoch home by an extraordinary translation from a brutish world; and when he was resolved to reckon with men for their brutish lives, he lodged Noah, the phœnix of the world, in an ark, and kept him alive, as a spark in the midst of many waters, whereby to rekindle a church in the world. In all generations he is a dwelling place, to secure his people here, or entertain them above. His providence is not wearied, nor his care fainting: he never wanted will to relieve us, *for he hath been our refuge;* nor ever can want power to support us, *for he is a God from everlasting to everlasting.* The church never wanted a pilot to steer her, and a rock to shelter her, and break the waves which threaten her.

2. *How worthy is it to remember former benefits, when we come to ask for new?* Never were the records of God's mercies so exactly revised, as when his people have stood in need of new editions of his power. How necessary are our wants to stir us up to pay the debt of thankfulness in arrear? He renders himself doubly unworthy of the mercies he wants, that doth not gratefully acknowledge the mercies he hath received. God scarce promised any deliverance to the Israelites, and they in their distress scarce prayed for any deliverance, but that from Egypt was mentioned on both sides; by God to encourage them, and by them to acknowledge their confidence in him. The greater our dangers, the more we should call to mind God's former kindness. We are not only thankfully to acknowledge the mercies bestowed upon our persons, or in our age, but those of former times. Thou hast been our dwelling place *in all generations.* Moses was not living in the former generations, yet he appropriates the former mercies to the present age. Mercies as well as ge-

* Theodoret in loc.

nerations proceed out of the loins of those that have gone before. All mankind are but one Adam; the whole church but one body.

In the second verse he backs his former consideration. 1. *By the greatness of his power, in forming the world.* 2. *By the boundlessness of his duration; from everlasting to everlasting.* As thou hast been our dwelling place, and expended upon us the strength of thy power, and riches of thy love; so we have no reason to doubt the continuance on thy part, if we be not wanting on our parts; for the vast mountains, and fruitful earth, are the works of thy hands; and there is less power requisite for our relief, than there was for their creation: and though so much strength hath been upon various occasions manifested, yet thy arm is not weakened; for *from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.** Thou hast always been God, and no time can be assigned as the beginning of thy being: the mountains are not of so long a standing as thyself; they are the effects of thy power, and therefore cannot be equal to thy duration; since they are effects, they suppose a precedency of their cause. If we would look back, we can reach no further than the beginning of the creation, and account the years from the first foundation of the world; but after that we must lose ourselves in the abyss of eternity; we have no clue to guide our thoughts; we can see no bounds in thy eternity: but as for man he traverseth the world a few days, and by thy order pronounced concerning all men, returns to the dust, and moulders in the grave.

By *mountains* some understand angels, as being creatures of a more elevated nature. By *earth*, they understand human nature, the earth being the habitation of men. There is no need to depart in this place, from the letter to such a sense. The description seems to be poetical, and amounts to this: He neither began with the beginning of time, nor will expire with the end of it†: he did not begin when he made himself known to our fathers; but his being preceded the creation of the world; before any created being was formed, and any time settled.

* אל strong. Amyrald in loc.

† ἄναρχος καὶ ἀτελέυτητος. Theodoret in loc.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or before they were begotten or born. The word being used in those senses in scripture; before they stood up higher than the rest of the earthly mass God had created. It seems that mountains were not casually cast up by the force of the deluge, softening the ground, and driving several parcels of it together to grow up into a massy body, as the sea doth the sand in some places; but they were at first formed by God.

The eternity of God is here described, 1. In his priority, "*before the world.*" 2. In the extension of his duration, "*from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*" He was before the world, yet he neither began nor ends: he is not a temporary, but an eternal God. It takes in both parts of eternity, what was before the creation of the world, and what is after. Though the eternity of God be one permanent state without succession, yet the Spirit of God, suiting himself to the weakness of our conceptions divides it into two parts, one past before the foundation of the world, another to come after the destruction of the world; as he existed before all ages, and as he will exist after all ages.

Many truths lie couched in the verse. 1. The world hath *a beginning of being.* It was not from eternity, it was once nothing; had it been of a very long duration, some records would have remained of some memorable actions done of a longer date than any extant. 2. The world *owes its being to the creating power of God,* "*Thou hadst formed it.*" Thou, that is, God; it could not spring into being of itself; it was nothing; it must have a former. 3. *God was in being before the world.* The cause must be before the effect; that word which gives being must be before that which receives being. 4. This Being was *from eternity,* "*from everlasting.*" 5. This Being shall endure *to eternity,* "*to everlasting.*" 6. There is but one God, *one Eternal,* "*from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*" None else but one hath the property of eternity; the gods of the heathen cannot lay claim to it.

Doct. God is of *an eternal duration.* The eternity of God is the foundation of the stability of the covenant, the

great comfort of a Christian. The design of God in scripture is to set forth his dealing with men in the way of a covenant. The priority of God before all things begins the bible; *In the beginning God created.* His covenant can have no foundation, but in his duration before and after the world;* and Moses here mentions his eternity, not only with respect to the essence of God, but to his federal providence; as he is the dwelling place of his people in all generations. The duration of God for ever, is more spoken of in scripture than his eternity *a parte ante,* though that is the foundation of all the comfort we can take from his immortality. If he had a beginning, he might have an end; and so all our happiness, hope, and being, would expire with him; but the scripture sometimes takes notice of his being without beginning, as well as without end. *Thou art from everlasting. Blessed be God from everlasting to everlasting; I was set up from everlasting,* *Psal.* 93. 2. and 41. 13. *Prov.* 8. 23. If his wisdom were from everlasting, himself was from everlasting; whether we understand it of Christ the Son of God, or of the essential wisdom of God, it is all one to the present purpose. The wisdom of God supposeth the essence of God, as habits in creatures suppose the being of some power or faculty as their subject. The wisdom of God supposeth mind and understanding, essence and substance.

The notion of eternity is difficult, as Austin said of time;† If no man will ask me the question, what time is, I know well enough what it is; but if any ask me what it is, I know not how to explain it. So may I say of eternity; it is easy in the word pronounced, but hardly understood, and more hardly expressed; it is better expressed by negative than positive words. Though we cannot comprehend eternity, yet we may comprehend that there is an eternity; as though we cannot comprehend the essence of God, what he is, yet we may comprehend *that he is;* we may understand the notion of his existence, though we cannot understand the infinity of his

* Calv. in loc. † Consul. lib. 11. Confes. 15.

nature; yet we may better understand eternity than infinity; we can better conceive a time with the addition of numberless days and years, than imagine a Being without bounds; whence the apostle, *Rom.* 1. 20, joins his eternity with his power; *his eternal power and god-head;* because next to the power of God apprehended in the creature, we come necessarily by reasoning to acknowledge the eternity of God. He that hath an incomprehensible power, must needs have an eternity of nature; his power is most sensible in the creatures to the eye of man, and his eternity easily from thence deducible by the reason of man.

Eternity is a perpetual duration, which hath neither beginning nor end; time hath both. Those things we say are in time, that have beginning, grow up by degrees, have succession of parts. Eternity is contrary to time, and is therefore a permanent and immutable state; a perfect possession of life without any variation. It comprehends in itself all years, all ages, all periods of ages; it never begins! It endures after every duration of time, and never ceaseth; it as much outruns time, as it went before the beginning of it. Time supposes something before it, but there can be nothing before eternity, it were then not eternity. Time hath a continual succession; the former time passeth away, and another succeeds; the last year is not this year, nor this year the next. We must conceive of eternity contrary to the notion of time; as the nature of time consists in the succession of parts, so the nature of eternity in an infinite immutable duration. * Eternity and time differ as the sea and rivers; the sea never changes place, and is always one water; but the rivers glide along, and are swallowed up in the sea; so is time by eternity.

A thing is said to be *eternal, or everlasting* rather, in scripture, 2. *When it is of a long duration, though it will have an end;* when it hath no measures of time determined to it; so circumcision is said, *Gen.* 17. 14, to be in the flesh for an everlasting covenant; not purely ever

* Moulin. Coo. 1. Ser. 2. p. 52.

lasting, but so long as that administration of the covenant should endure. And so when a servant would not leave his master, but have his ear bored; it is said, *Deut.* 15. 17, he should be a servant *for ever*, i. e. till the Jubilee, which was every fiftieth year: so the meat-offering they were to offer, is said, *Levit.* 6. 20, to be *perpetual.* Canaan is said, *Gen.* 17. 8, to be given to Abraham *for an everlasting possession*; whereas the Jews are expelled from Caanan, which is given a prey to the barbarous nations. Indeed circumcision was not everlasting; yet the substance of the covenant whereof this was a sign, that God would be the God of believers, endures for ever; and that circumcision of the heart which was signified by circumcision of the flesh, shall remain for ever in the kingdom of glory: it was not so much the lasting of the sign, as of the thing signified, and the covenant sealed by it; the sign had its abolition, so that the apostle is so peremptory in it, that he asserts, that if any went about to establish it, he excluded himself from a participation of Christ, *Gal.* 5. 2. The sacrifices were to be perpetual, in regard of the thing signified by them, viz. The death of Christ, which was to endure in the efficacy of it: and the passover was to be for ever, in regard of the redemption signified by it, which was to be of everlasting remembrance, *Exod.* 12. 24. Canaan was to be an everlasting possession in regard of the glory of heaven typified, to be for ever conferred upon the spiritual seed of Abraham.

3. *When a thing hath no end, though it hath a beginning.* So angels and souls are everlasting: though their being shall never cease, yet there was a time when their being began; they were nothing before they were something, though they shall never be nothing again, but shall live in endless happiness or misery.

But *that properly is eternal, that hath neither beginning nor end;* and thus eternity is a property of God. In this doctrine I shall shew, 1. How God is eternal, or in what respects eternity is his property. 2. That he is eternal, and must needs be so. 3. That eternity is only

proper to God, and not common to him with any creature. 4. The Use.

1. *How God is eternal, or in what respects he is so.* Eternity is a negative attribute, and is denying of God any measures of time, as immensity is denying of him any bounds of place; as immensity is the diffusion of his essence, so eternity is the duration of his essence; and when we say God is eternal, we exclude from him all possibility of beginning and ending, all flux and change: as the essence of God cannot be bounded by any place, so it is not to be limited by any time; as it is his immensity to be every where, so it is his eternity to be always. * As created things are said to be somewhere in regard of place, and to be present, past, or future, in regard of time; so the Creator, in regard of place, is every where; in regard of time, is *semper*: † His duration is as endless, as his essence is boundless: He always was and always will be, and will no more have an end that he had a beginning? and this is an excellency belonging to the supreme Being. ‡ As his essence comprehends all beings and exceeds them, and his immensity surmounts all places; so his eternity comprehends all times, all durations, and infinitely excels them.

1. God is without *beginning*. In the beginning God created the world: God was then before the beginning of it; and what point can be set wherein God began, if he were before the beginning of created things? God was without beginning, though all other things had time and beginning from him. As unity is before all numbers, so is God before all his creatures. Abraham called upon the name of the *everlasting* God, *Gen.* 21. 63. אלערלם The eternal God; as opposed to the heathen gods, which were but of *yesterday*. The eternal God, was before the world was made: In that sense it is to be understood, *The mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest; and by the scriptures of the prophets according to the command of the everlasting God,*

* Gassend. † Crellius de Deo, cap. 18. p. 41.

‡ Lingend, Tom. 2. p. 496.

made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, Rom. 16. 26. The gospel is not preached by the command of a new and temporary god, but of that God that was before all ages; though the manifestation of it be in time, yet the purpose and decree of it was from eternity.

If there were decrees before the foundation of the world, there was a decreer before the foundation of the world. Before the foundation of the world, he loved Christ as a mediator. A fore-ordination of him was *before the foundation* of the world; a choice of men, and therefore a chooser, *before the foundation* of the world; a *grace given in Christ before the world began,* and therefore a donor of that grace. From those places, saith Carellius, it appears that God, was before the foundation of the world, yet they do not assert an absolute eternity; * but to be before all creatures, is equivalent to his being from eternity. Time began with the foundation of the world, but God being before time, could have no beginning in time. Before the beginning of the creation, and the beginning of time, there could be nothing but eternity; nothing but what was uncreated, that is, nothing but what was *without beginning.* To be in time is to have a beginning; to be before all time is never to have a beginning, but always to be: for as between the Creator and creatures there is no medium, so between time and eternity there is no medium. It is as easily deduced, that he that was before all creatures is eternal, as he that made all creatures is God. If he had a beginning, he must have it from another, or from himself; if from another, that from what he received it, would be more a God than he. He cannot be God that is not supreme; he cannot be supreme that owes his being to the power of another: he would not be said *only to have immortality* as he is, if he had it dependant upon another: Nor could he have a beginning from himself, if he had given beginning to himself, then he was once nothing, there was a time when he was not; if he was not, how could he be the cause of himself? It is impossible for

* Coccei Sum. p. 48. Theol. Gerhard Exeges. cap. 86. 4. p. 266.

anything to give a beginning and being to itself: if it acts it must exist; and so exist, before it existed: a thing would exist as a cause, before it existed as an effect. He that is not, cannot be the cause that he is; if therefore God exists, and hath not his being from another, he must exist from eternity: therefore when we say God is of and from himself, we mean not that God gave being to himself; but it is negatively to be understood, that he hath no cause of existence without himself.

Whatsoever number of millions of millions of years we can imagine before the creation of the world, yet God was infinitely before those; he is therefore called, *Dan.* 7. 9, *the Ancient of days*, as being before all days and time, and eminently containing in himself all times and ages: though indeed God cannot properly be called ancient, that will testify that he is decaying, and shortly will not be; no more than he can be called young, which would signify that he was not long before. All created things are new and fresh; but no creature can find out any beginning of God: it is impossible there should be any beginning of him.

2. God is *without end.* He always was, always is, and always will be what he is; he remains always the same in being; so far from any *change*, that *no shadow* of it can touch him, *James* 1. 17. He will continue in being as long as he hath already enjoyed it; and if we could add never so many millions of years together, we are still as far from an end, as from a beginning; for *the Lord shall endure for ever*, *Psal.* 9. 7. As it is impossible he should not be, being from all eternity; so it is impossible that he should not be to all eternity. The scripture is most plentiful in testimonies of this eternity of God, *a parte post*, or after the creation of the world: He is said to live *for ever*, *Rev.* 4. 9, 10. The earth *shall perish*, but God *shall endure for ever*, and his *years shall have no end*, *Psal.* 102. 27. Plants and animals grow up from small beginnings; arrive to their full growth, and decline again, and have always remarkable alterations in their nature; but there is no declination in

God by all the revolutions of time: hence some think the incorruptibility of the deity was signified by the *cedar wood*, whereof the ark was made, it being of an incorruptible nature, *Exod.* 25. 10.

That which had no beginning of duration can never have an end, or any interruptions in it. Since God never depended upon any, what should make him cease to be what eternally he hath been, or put a stop to the continuance of his perfections? He cannot will his own destruction, that is against universal nature in all things to cease from being, if they can preserve themselves. He cannot desert his own being, because he cannot but love himself as the best and chiefest good. The reason that any thing decays, is either its own native weakness, or superior power of something contrary to it. * There is no weakness in the nature of God, that can introduce any corruption, because he is infinitely simple without any mixture; nor can he be overpowered by any thing else, a weaker cannot hurt him, and a stronger than he there cannot be; nor can he be outwitted or circumvented, because of his infinite wisdom. As he received his being from none, so he cannot be deprived of it by any; as he doth necessarily exist, so he doth necessarily always exist; this indeed is the property of God; nothing so proper to him, as always to be. Whatsoever perfection any being hath, if it be *not eternal*, it is *not divine*. God *only* is immortal; † he only is so by a necessity of nature: angels, souls, and bodies too, after the resurrection, shall be immortal; not by nature but grant; they are subject to return to nothing, if that word that raised them from nothing should speak them into nothing again: it is as easy with God to strip them of it as to invest them with it; nay, it is impossible but that they should perish, if God should withdraw his power from preserving them, which he exerted in creating them: but God is immoveably fixed in his own being; that as none gave him his life, so none can deprive him of his life, or the least particle of it; not a jot of the

* Crellius de Deo, cap. 18. p 41. † Daille in loc.

happiness and life, which God infinitely possesses, can be lost: it will be as durable to everlasting, as it hath been possessed from everlasting.

3. There is *no succession in God.* God is without succession or change. It is a part of eternity; *from everlasting to everlasting* he is *God*, i. e. the same. God doth not only always remain in being, but he always remains the same in that being, *Thou art the same.* The being of creatures is successive; the being of God is permanent, and remains intire with all its perfections, unchanged in an infinite duration. Indeed the first notion of eternity is to be without beginning and end, which denotes to us the duration of a being in regard of its existence; but to have no succession, nothing first or last, denotes rather the perfection of a being in regard of its essence.

The creatures are in a perpetual change; something is acquired, or something lost every day. A man is the same in regard of existence when he is a man, as he was when he was a child; but there is a new succession of quantities and qualities in him: every day he acquires something till he comes to his maturity; every day he loseth something till he comes to his period. A man is not the same at night that he was in the morning; something is expired, and something is added; every day there is a change in his age, a change in his substance, a change in his accidents: but God hath his whole being in one and the same point, or moment of eternity; he receives nothing as an addition to what he was before; he loseth nothing of what he was before; he is always the same excellency and perfection in the same infiniteness as ever.

His *years* do *not fail;* his years do not come and go as others do; there is not this day, to morrow, or yesterday with him: As nothing is past or future with him in regard of knowledge, but all things are present; so nothing is past or future in regard of his essence; he is not in his essence this day what he was not before, or will be the next day and year what he is not now.* All his perfec-

* Lessius de perfect. divin. lib. 4. cap. 1.

tions are most perfect in him every moment, before all ages, after all ages: as he hath his whole essence undivided in every place, as well as in immense space; so he hath all his being in one moment of time, as well as in infinite intervals of time.* Some illustrate the difference between eternity and time, by the similitude of a tree, or a rock standing upon the side of a river, or shore of the sea; the tree stands always the same and unmoved, while the waters of the river glide along at the foot; the flux is in the river, but the tree acquires nothing but a diverse respect and relation of presence to the various parts of the river as they flow. The waters of the river press on, and push forward one another, and what the river had this minute, it hath not the same the next; so are all sublunary things in a continual flux. And though the angels have no substantial change, yet they have an accidental; for the actions of the angels this day, are not the same individual actions which they performed yesterday. But in God there is no change, he always remains the same.

Of a creature it † may be said, he was, or he is, or he shall be; of God it cannot be said, but only he is; he is what he always was, and he is what he always will be; whereas a creature is what he was not, and will be what he is not now; as it may be said of the flame of a candle, it is flame, but it is not the same individual flame as was before, nor is it the same that will be presently after; there is a continual dissolution of it into air, and a continual supply for the generation of more; while it continues, it may be said there is a flame; yet not entirely one, but in a succession of parts; so of a man it may be said, he is in a succession of parts; but he is not the same that he was, and will not be the same that he is: but God is the same without any succession of part, and of time; of him it may be said, He is; he is no more now than he was, and he shall be no more hereafter than he is. * God possesses a firm and absolute being, always constant to himself; He sees all things moving under him in a con-

* Gamacheus in Aquin. part 1. Qu. 10. cap. 1.
† Gassend. Tom. 1. Physic. § 1. l. 2. c. 7. p. 223.
‡ Daille Melange de Sermon, p. 252.

tinual variation; he beholds the revolutions in the world without any change of his most glorious and immoveable nature: all other things pass from one state to another; from their original, to their eclipse and destruction: but God possesses his being in one indivisible point, having neither beginning nor end.

There is no succession *in the knowledge of God.* The variety of successions and changes in the world, make not succession or new objects in the divine mind; for all things are present to him from eternity in regard of his knowledge, though they are not actually present in the world in regard of their existence: he doth not know one thing now, and another anon; he sees all things at once; *known unto God are all things from the beginning of the world. Acts* 15. 18. But in their true order of succession, as they lie in the eternal council of God, to be brought forth in time. Though there be a succession and order of things as they are wrought, yet there is no succession in God in regard of his knowledge of them. God knows the things that shall be wrought, and the order of them in their being brought upon the stage of the world; yet both the things and the order he knows by one act. Though all things be present with God, yet they are present in him in the order of their appearance in the world, and not so present with him as if they should be wrought at once. The death of Christ was to precede his resurrection in order of time; there is a succession in this; both at once are known by God, yet the act of his knowledge is not exercised about Christ as dying and rising at the same time; so that there is succession in things, when there is no succession in God's knowledge of them. Since God knows time, he knows all things as they are in time; he doth not know all things to be at once, though he knows at once what is, has been, and will be. All things are past, present, and to come in regard of their existence; but there is not past, present, and to come in regard of God's knowledge of them; * because he sees and knows not by any other, but by himself; he is his own

* Parisiensis.]

light by which he sees, his own glass wherein he sees; beholding himself, he beholds all things.

There is no succession in the *decrees of God.* He doth not decree this now, which he decreed not before; for as his works were known from the beginning of the world, so his works were decreed from the beginning of the world; as they are known at once, so they are decreed at once; there is a succession in the execution of them, first grace, then glory; but the purpose of God for the bestowing of both, was in one and the same moment of eternity. *He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy. Eph.* 1. 4. The choice of Christ, and the choice of some in him to be holy, and to be happy, were before the foundation of the world. It is by the eternal counsel of God, all things appear in time; they appear in their order according to the counsel and will of God from eternity. The redemption of the world is after the creation of the world; but the decree whereby the world was created, and whereby it was redeemed, was from eternity.

4. *God is his own eternity.* He is not eternal by grant, and the disposal of any other, but by nature and essence. * The eternity of God is nothing else but the duration of God; and the duration of God is nothing else but his existence enduring. If eternity were any thing distinct from God, and not of the essence of God, then there would be something which was not God, necessary to perfect God. As immortality is the great perfection of a rational creature, so eternity is the choicest perfection of God, yea, the lustre and glory of all others. Every perfection would be imperfect, if it were not always a perfection. God is essentially whatsoever he is; and there is nothing in God but his essence. Duration, or continuance in being in creatures, differs from their being; for they might exist but for one instant; in which case they may be said to have being, but not duration, because all duration includes *prius & posterius.* All creatures may cease from being, if it be the pleasure of God;

* Calov. Socinian. Existentia durans.

they are not therefore durable by their essence, and therefore are not their own duration, no more than they are their own existence. And though some creatures, as angels and souls, may be called everlasting, as a perpetual life is communicated to them by God; yet they can never be called their own eternity; because such a duration is not simply necessary, nor essential to them, but accidental, depending upon the pleasure of another; there is nothing in their nature that can hinder them from losing it, if God, from whom they received it, should design to take it away: but as God is his own necessity of existing, so he is his own duration in existing: * as he doth necessarily exist by himself, so he will always necessarily exist by himself.

5. Hence *all the perfections of God are visible.* In regard of the divine eternity, all things in God are eternal, his power, mercy, wisdom, justice, knowledge. God himself were not eternal, if any of his perfections which are essential to him were not eternal also; he hath not else been a perfect God from eternity, and so his whole self had not been eternal. If any thing belonging to the nature of a thing be wanting, it cannot be said to be that thing which it ought to be. If any thing requisite to the nature of God had been wanting one moment, he could not have been said to be an eternal God.

II. *God is eternal.* The spirit of God in scripture condescends to our capacities in signifying the eternity of God by days and years, which are terms belonging to time, whereby we measure it, *Psal.* 102. 27, but we must no more conceive that God is bounded, or measured by time, and hath succession of days because of those expressions, than we can conclude him to have a body, because members are ascribed to him in scripture, to help our conceptions of his glorious nature and operations. Though years are ascribed to him; yet they are such as cannot be numbered, cannot be finished, since there is no proportion between the duration of God, and the years of men, *The number of his years cannot be searched out;*

* Gassend.

for he makes small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof. *Job* 36. 26, 27. The numbers of the drops of rain which have fallen in all parts of the earth since the creation of the world, if substracted from the number of the years of God, would be found a small quantity, a mere nothing to the years of God. As all the nations in the world, compared with God, are but as the *drop of a bucket, less than nothing, and vanity;* so all the ages of the world, if compared with God, amount not to so much as the one hundred thousandth part of a minute. The minutes from the creation may be numbered, but the years of the duration of God, being infinite, are without measure.

As one day is to the life of man, so are a thousand years to the life of God. The Holy Ghost expresseth himself to the capacity of man, to give us some notion of an infinite duration, by a resemblance suited to the capacity of man, *Psal.* 90. 5.* If a thousand years be but as a day to the life of God; then as a year is to the life of man, so are three hundred and sixty-five thousand years to the life of God: and as seventy years are to the life of man, so are twenty-five millions four hundred and fifty thousand years to the life of God: Yet still, since there is no proportion between time and eternity, we must dart our thoughts beyond all those; † for years and days measure only the duration of created things, and of those only that are material and corporeal, subject to the motion of the heavens, which makes days and years.

Sometimes this eternity is expressed by parts, as looking backward and forward; by the differences of time, *past, present, and to come, which was, and is, and is to come.* *Rev.* 1. 8. & 4. 8. ‡ Though this might be spoken of any thing in being, though but for an hour; it was the last minute, it is now, and it will be the next minute; yet the Holy Ghost would declare something proper to God, as including all parts of time; he always

* Amyrald Trin. p. 44.
† Daille Vent. Sermons, Ser. 1. sur. 102 Psal. 27. p. 21.
‡ Crellius weakens this argument, De Deo. cap. 18. p. 42.

was, is now, and always shall be; it might always be said of him he was, and it may always be said of him he will be: there is no time when he began, no time when he shall cease. It cannot be said of a creature he always was, he always is what he was, and he always will be what he is: but God always is what he was, and always will be what he is; so that it is a very significant expression of the eternity of God as can be suited to our capacities.

1. His eternity is evident by *the name God gives himself. And God said unto Moses, I am that I am; thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you, Exod.* 3. 14. This is the name whereby he is distinguished from all creatures; *I am*, is his proper name; this description being in the present tense, shews that his essence knows no past, nor future: if it were he was, it would intimate he were not now what he once was; if it were he will be, it would intimate he were not yet what he will be. But *I am;* I am the only being, the root of all beings; he is therefore at the greatest distance from not being, and that is eternal. So that *is* signifies his eternity, as well as his perfection and immutability: As *I am* speaks the want of no blessedness, so it speaks the want of no duration; and therefore the French wherever they find this word Jehovah in the scripture, which we translate Lord, and Lord Eternal, render it the *Eternal. I am* always, and immutably the same. The eternity of God is opposed to the volubility of time, which is extended into past, present, and to come. Our time is but a small drop, as sand to all the atoms and small particles of which the world is made; but God is an unbounded sea of beings: *I am that I am*, i. e. an infinite life. I have not that now, which I had not formerly; I shall not afterwards have that which I have not now; *I am* that in every moment which I was, and will be in all moments of time; there is nothing superior to him, which can detract from him; nothing desirable that can be added to him. * Now if

* Thes. Salmur. p. 1. p. 145. Plutarch de ᾶ Ei. 1. p. 462.

there were any beginning and end of God, any succession in him, he could not be *I am;* for in regard of what was past he would not be, in regard of what was to come he is not yet; and upon this account, a heathen argues well, of all creatures it may be said they were, or they will be; but of God it cannot be said any thing else but *est*, God *is*, because he fills an eternal duration: A creature cannot be said to be, if it be not yet, nor if it be not now, but hath been.*

God only can be called *I am;* all creatures have more of not being than being; for every creature was nothing from eternity, before it was made something in time; and if it be corruptible in its whole nature, it will be nothing to eternity after it hath been something in time; and if it be not corruptible in its nature, as the angels; or in every part of its nature, as man in regard of his soul; yet it hath not properly a being, because it is dependent upon the pleasure of God to continue it, or deprive it of it; and while it *is*, it is mutable, and all mutability is a mixture of not being: If God therefore be properly *I am*, i. e. Being, it follows that he always was; for if he were not always, he must, as was argued before, be produced by some other, or by himself; by another he could not, then he had not been God but a creature; nor by himself, for then as producing, he must be before himself, as produced; he had been before he was: and he always will be, for being *I am*, having all being in himself, and the fountain of all being to every thing else, how can he ever have his name changed to *I am not?*

2. *God hath life in himself;* John 5, 26, *The Father hath life in himself*, He is the *living God*, therefore *steadfast for ever. Dan.* 6. 26. He hath life by his essence, not by participation; he is a sun to give light and life to all creatures, but receives not light or life from any thing; and therefore he hath an unlimited life, not a drop of life, but a fountain, not a spark of a limited life, but a life transcending all bounds: he hath life in himself: all creatures have

* Perer. in Exo. 3. Disput. 13.

their life in him and from him. He that hath life in himself doth necessarily exist, and could never be made to exist; for then he had not life in himself, but in that which made him to exist, and gave him life; what doth necessarily exist, therefore, exists from eternity; what hath being of itself, could never be produced in time, could not want being one moment, because it hath being from its essence, without influence from any efficient cause. * When God pronounced his name, *I am, that I am,* angels and men were in being; the world had been created above two thousand four hundred years; Moses to whom he then speaks, was in being; yet, God only *is*, because he only hath the fountain of being himself, but all that they were, was a rivulet from him: he hath from nothing else that he doth subsist; every thing else hath its subsistence from him as their root, as the beam from the sun, as the rivers and fountains from the sea.

All life is seated in God, as in its proper throne; in its most perfect purity. God is life; it is in him originally, radically, therefore eternally: he is a pure act, nothing but vigour and act; he hath by his nature that life, which others have by his grant; whence the apostle saith, 1 *Tim.* 6, 16, not only that he is immortal, but he *hath immortality* in full possession; fee simple, not depending upon the will of another, but containing all things within himself. He that hath life in himself, and is from himself, cannot but be: he always was, because he received his being from no other, and none can take away that being which was not given by another. If there were any space before he existed, then there were something which made him to exist; life would not then be in him, but in that which produced him into being; he could not then be God, but that other which gave him being would be God: and to say, God sprung into being by chance, when we see nothing in the world that is brought forth by chance, but hath some cause of its existence, would be vain; for since God is a being, chance, which is nothing, could not bring forth something;

* Petav. Theol. Dogm. tom. I. lib. 1. c 6. § 6. 7.

‡ Amyrald de Trinit. p. 48.

and by the same reason that he sprung up by chance, he might totally vanish by chance. What a strange notion of a God would this be, such a God that had no life in himself, but from chance! Since he had life in himself, and that there was no cause of his existence; he can have no cause of his limitation, and can no more be determined to a time, than he can to a place. What hath life in itself, hath life without bounds, and can never desert it, nor be deprived of it: so that he lives necessarily, and it is absolutely impossible that he should not live; whereas all other things *live*, and *move*, *and have* their *being in him;* and as they live by his will, so they can return to nothing at his word.

3. *If God were not eternal, he were not immutable in his nature.* It is contrary to the nature of immutability to be without eternity; for whatsoever begins, is changed in its passing from not being to being: it began to be what it was not, and if it ends, it ceaseth to be what it was: it cannot, therefore, be said to be God, if there were either beginning or ending, or succession in it, *I am the Lord, I change not, Mal.* 3, 6. *Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out, Job* 37, 23. God argues here, saith Calvin, from his unchangeable nature as Jehovah, to his immutability in his purpose: had he not been eternal, there had been the greatest change from nothing to something: a change of the essence, is greater than a change of purpose. God is a sun glittering always in the same glory: no growing up in youth; no passing on to age: if he were not without succession, standing in one point of eternity, there would be a change from past to present, from present to future. The eternity of God is a shield against all kind of mutability. If any thing sprang up in the essence of God. that was not there before, he could not be said to be either an eternal, or an unchanged substance.

4. God could not be *an infinitely perfect Being, if he were not eternal.* A finite duration is inconsistent with infinite perfection. Whatsoever is contracted within the limits of time, cannot swallow up all perfections in itself. God hath an unsearchable perfection. *Job* 11. 7, *Canst thou by searching find out God; canst thou find out the*

Almighty unto perfection? He cannot be found out, he is infinite, because he is incomprehensible. Incomprehensibility ariseth from an infinite perfection, which cannot be fathomed by the short lines of man's understanding. His essence, in regard of its diffusion, and in regard of its duration, is incomprehensible as well as his action. If God therefore had beginning, he could not be infinite; if not infinite, he did not possess the highest perfection, because a perfection might be conceived beyond it; if his being could fail, he were not perfect. Can that deserve the name of the highest perfection, which is capable of corruption and dissolution? To be finite and limited, is the greatest imperfection, for it consists in a denial of being. He could not be the most blessed Being, if he were not always so, and should not for ever remain to be so; and whatsoever perfections he had, would be soured by the thoughts, that in time they would cease, and so could not be pure perfections, because not permanent; but *he is blessed from everlasting to everlasting*, *Psal.* 41. 13. Had he a beginning, he could not have all perfection without limitation; he would have been limited by that which gave him beginning; that which gave him being would be God, and not himself, and so more perfect than he. But since God is the most sovereign perfection, than which nothing can be imagined more perfect by the most capacious understanding, he is certainly eternal; being infinite, nothing can be added to him, nothing detracted from him.

5. God could not be *omnipotent if he were not eternal*, The title of Almighty agrees not with a nature that had a beginning; whatsoever hath a beginning was once nothing, and when it was nothing could act nothing. Where there is no being, there is no power; neither doth the title of Almighty agree with a perishing nature. He can do nothing to purpose, that cannot preserve himself against the outward force and violence of enemies, or against the inward causes of corruption and dissolution. No account is to be made of man, because *his breath is in his nostrils.* Could a better account be made of God if he were of the like condition? He could not properly be Almighty,

if he were not *always so.* If he be omnipotent, nothing can impair him: if he doth whatsoever he pleaseth, nothing can make him miserable, since misery consists in those things which happen against our will. The omnipotence and eternity of God are linked together: *I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty, Rev.* 1. 8. Almighty because eternal, and eternal because almighty.

6. *God would not be the first cause of all if he were not eternal;* but he is the first, and the last; the first cause of all things, the last end of all things: *Rev.* 1. 8. * That which is the first cannot begin to be, it were not then the first; it cannot cease to be: whatsoever is dissolved, is dissolved into that whereof it doth consist, which was before it, and then it was not the first.† The world might not have been, it was once nothing; it must have some cause to call it out of nothing; nothing hath no power to make itself something; there is a superior cause, by whose will and power it comes into being, and so gives all the creatures their distinct forms. This power cannot but be eternal; it must be before the world; the founder must be before the foundation; ‡ and his existence must be from eternity, or we must say nothing did exist from eternity: and if there were no being from eternity, there could not now be any being in time: what we see, and what we are, must arise from itself or some other. It cannot from itself; if any thing made itself, it had a power to make itself; it then had an active power before it had a being; it was something in regard of power, and was nothing in regard of existence at the same time. Suppose it had a power to produce itself, this power must be conferred upon it by another; and so the power of producing itself, was not from itself, but from another; but if the power of being was from itself, why did it not produce itself before? Why was it one moment out of being? § If there be any existence of things? It

* Ficin. de Immort. l. 2. cap. 5. † Coccei Sum. Theol.
‡ Crellius de Deo, cap. 18. p. 43.
§ Petav. Theol. Dogmat. tom. 1. l. 1. c. 10, 11.

is necessary that that which was the *first cause*, should *exist from eternity.* Whatsoever was the immediate cause of the world, yet the first and chief cause wherein we must rest, must have nothing before it; if it had any thing before it, it were not the first; he therefore that is the first cause must be without beginning, nothing must be before him; if he had a beginning from some other, he could not be the first principle and author of all things; if he be the first cause of all things, he must give himself a beginning, or to be from eternity, he could not give himself a beginning: whatsoever begins in time was nothing before, and when it was nothing it could do nothing; it could not give itself any thing, for then it gave what it had not, and did what it could not: if he made himself in time, why did he not make himself before? What hindered him; it was either because he could not, or because he would not: if he could not, he always wanted power, and always would unless it were bestowed upon him, and then he could not be said to be from himself? If he would not make himself before, then he might have made himself when he would: how had he the power of willing and nilling without a being? Nothing cannot will or nill, nothing hath no faculties: so that it is necessary to grant some eternal Being, or run into inextricable labyrinths and mazes. If we deny some eternal Being, we must deny all being; our own being, the being of every thing about us; inconceivable absurdities will arise. So then if God were the cause of all things, he existed before all things, and that from eternity.

III. Eternity is only proper to God and not *communicable.** It is as great a madness to ascribe eternity to the creature, as to deprive the Lord of the creature of eternity. It is so proper to God, that when the apostle would prove the deity of Christ, he proves it by his immutability and eternity, as well as his creating power: *Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. Heb.* 1. 10, 11, 12. The argument had no strength, if eternity be-

* Bapt.

longed essentially to any but God; and therefore he is said *only* to *have immortality*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 16. All other things receive their being from him, and can be deprived of their being by him: all things depend on him, he on none: all other things are like clothes, which would consume if God preserved them not. Immortality is appropriated to God, i. e. an independent immortality. Angels and souls have an immortality, but by donation from God, not by their own essence; dependent upon their Creator, not necessary in their own nature. God might have annihilated them after he had created them; so that their duration cannot properly be called an eternity, it being extrinsical to them, and depending upon the will of their Creator, by whom they may be extinguished; it is not an absolute and necessary, but a precarious immortality. Whatsoever is not God, is temporary: whatsoever is eternal, is God. It is a contradiction to say a creature can be eternal! as nothing eternal is created, so nothing created is eternal. What is distinct from the nature of God cannot be eternal, eternity being the essence of God. Every creature in the notion of a creature speaks a dependance on some cause, and therefore cannot be eternal. * As it is repugnant to the nature of God not to be eternal, so it is repugnant to the nature of a creature to be eternal; for then a creature would be equal to the Creator, and the Creator, or the cause would not be before the creature or effect. It would be all one to admit many Gods, as many eternals; and to say God can be created, as to say a creature can be uncreated, which is to be eternal.

1. *Creation is a producing something from nothing.* What was once nothing, cannot therefore be eternal; not being was eternal; therefore its being could not be eternal, for it should be then before it was, and would be something when it was nothing. It is the nature of a creature to be nothing before it was created; what was nothing before it was, cannot be equal with God in an eternity of duration.

2. There is no creature but is *mutable*, therefore not

* Lessius de Perfect. l. 4. c. 2.

eternal. As it has a change from nothing to something, so it may be changed from being to not being. If the creature were not mutable it would be most perfect, and so would not be a creature but God; for God only is most perfect. It is as much the essence of a creature to be mutable, as it is the essence of God to be immutable: mutability and eternity are utterly inconsistent.

3. No creature is infinite, therefore not eternal. To be infinite in duration is all one, as to be infinite in essence. * It is as reasonable to conceive a creature immense, filling all places at once, as eternal, extended to all ages; because neither can be without infinity, which is the property of the deity. A creature may as well be without bounds of place, as limitations of time.

4. No effect of an intellectual free agent, can be *equal in duration to its cause.* The production of natural agents are as ancient often as themselves; the sun produceth a beam as old in time as itself; but whoever heard of a piece of wise workmanship as old as the wise artificer? God produced a creature, not necessarily and naturally, as the sun does a beam, but freely, as an intelligent agent. The sun was not necessary; it might be or not be, according to the pleasure of God. † A free act of the will is necessary to precede, in order of time, as the cause of such effects as are purely voluntary. Those causes that act as soon as they exist, act naturally, necessarily, not freely, and cannot cease from acting. But suppose a creature might have existed by the will of God from eternity; yet, as some think, it could not be said absolutely, and in its own nature, to be eternal; because eternity was not of the essence of it. The creature could not be its own duration; for though it were from eternity, it might not have been from eternity, because its existence depended upon the free will of God, who might have chose whether he would have created it or no. God only is eternal, *the first and the last, the beginning and the end;* who, as he subsisted before any creature had a being, so he will eternally subsist if all creatures were reduced to nothing.

* Lessius de perfect. l. 4. c. 2.
† Crellius de Deo, cap. 18. p. 13.

PART II.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S ETERNITY IMPROVED.

The Godhead of Christ argued—God knows all things as present—Folly of censuring God—Evil of sin—Wrath of an eternal God dreadful—His Eternity the comfort and joy of his people—Consideration of God's eternity produces an affecting sense of past Sins—Abates pride—Subdues the love of the world—Frequent meditation of the eternity of God, the duty of christians—An eternal God worthy of our supreme affection and best obedience.

I. THE subject affords important information.

1. If God be of an eternal duration, then Christ is God: eternity is the property of God, but it is ascribed to Christ, *Col.* 1. 17, *He is before all things*, i. e. all created things: he is therefore no creature; and if no creature, eternal. *All things were created by him*, both in heaven and in earth, angels as well as men, *whether they be thrones or dominions*, *Col.* 1. 16. If all things were his creatures, then he is no creature; if he were, all things were not created by him, or he must create himself. He hath no difference of time; *for he is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*, *Heb.* 13. 2. The same with the name of God, *I am*, which signifies his eternity; he is no more to day than he was yesterday, nor will be any other to morrow than he is to day; and therefore Melchisedeck, whose descent, birth and death, father and mother, beginning and end of days are not upon record, was a type of the existence of Christ without difference of time; *Having neither beginning of days nor*

end of life, but made like the Son of God, Heb. 7. 3. The suppression of his birth and death, was intended by the Holy Ghost as a type of the excellency of Christ's person in regard of his eternity, and the duration of his charge in regard of his priesthood. As there was an appearance of an eternity in the suppression of the race of Melchisedeck, so there is a true eternity in the Son of God.

How could the eternity of the Son of God be expressed by any resemblance so well, as by such a suppression of the beginning and end of this great person, different from the custom of the Spirit of God in the old testament, who often records the generations and ends of holy men; and why might not this, which was a kind of a shadow of eternity, be a representation of the true eternity of Christ; as well as the restoration of Isaac to his father without death, is said to be a figure of the resurrection of Christ after a real death? Melchisedeck is only mentioned once,* without any record of his extraction, in his appearance to Abraham after his victory, as if he came from heaven only for that action, and instantly disappeared again, as if he had been an eternal person.

And Christ himself hints his own eternity, *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world, again I leave the world and go to the Father, John* 16, 28. He goes to the Father as he came from the Father; he goes to the Father *for everlasting*, so he came from the Father *from everlasting*; there is the same duration in coming forth from the Father, as in returning to the Father. But more plainly; he speaks, *John* 17, 5, of a glory that he *had with the Father before the world was*, when there was no creature in being; this is an actual glory, and not only in decree: for a decreed glory believers had, and why may not every one of them say the same words, *Father glorify me with that glory which I had with thee before the world was*, if it were only a glory in decree? Nay, it may be said of every man, he was before the world was, because

* Mestræzat in loc.

he was so in decree. Christ speaks of something peculiar to him, a glory in actual possession before the world was; *Glorify me*, embrace, honour me as thy Son; whereas, I have now been in the eyes of the world handled disgracefully as a servant: If it were only in decree, why is not the like expression used of others in scripture, as well as of Christ? Why did he not use the same words for his disciples that were then with him, who had glory in decree?

His eternity is also mentioned in the old testament: *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old, Prov.* 8, 22. If he were the work of God, he existed before himself, if he existed before all the works of God; it is not so properly meant of the essential wisdom of God, since the discourse runs in the name of a person; and there are several passages, which belong not so much to the essential wisdom of God, as *Prov.* 8, 13, *The evil way and the froward mouth do I hate;* which belongs rather to the holiness of God, than to the essential wisdom of God; besides, it is distinguished from Jehovah, as possessed by him, *and rejoicing before him.* Yet plainer, *Out of thee*, i. e. Bethlehem, *shall he come forth to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting* מימיעולם from the ways of Eternity, *Mic.* 5. 2. There are two goings forth of Christ described, one from Bethlehem in the days of his incarnation, and another from eternity. The Holy Ghost adds after his prediction of his incarnation, his going out from everlasting, that none should doubt of his deity: if this going out from everlasting, were only in the purpose of God, the same might be said of David, and of every creature: and in *Isa.* 9, 6, he is particularly called the Everlasting, or Eternal Father: not the Father in the Trinity, but a Father to us, yet eternal. As he is *the mighty God*, so he is *the Everlasting Father.* Can such a title be ascribed to any, whose being depends upon the will of another, and may be obliterated at the pleasure of a superior?

As the eternity of God is the ground of all religion, so the eternity of Christ is the ground of the christian reli-

gion. Could our sins be perfectly expiated, had he not an eternal divinity to answer for the offences committed against an eternal God? Temporary sufferings had been of little validity, without an infinity and eternity in his person to add weight to his passion.

2. *If God be eternal, he knows all things as present.* All things are present to him in his eternity; for this is the notion of eternity, to be without succession. If eternity be one indivisible point, and is not diffused into preceding and succeeding parts, then that which is known in it or by it, is perceived without any succession; for knowledge is as the substance of the person knowing; if that hath various actions, and distinct from itself, then it understands things in differences of time, as time presents them to view: but since God's being depends not upon the revolutions of time, so neither doth his knowledge; it exceeds all motions of years and days, and comprehends infinite spaces of past and future. God considers all things in his eternity in one simple knowledge, as if they were now acted before him: *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world* ἀπ' αἰῶνος *a seculo;* from eternity. God's knowledge is co-eternal with him: if he knows that in time, which he did not know from eternity, he would not be eternally perfect, since knowledge is the perfection of an intelligent nature.

3. *How bold and foolish it is for a mortal creature, to censure the counsels and actions of an eternal God, or be too curious in his inquisitions?* It is by the consideration of the unsearchable number of the years of God, that Elihu checks too bold enquiries, *Job* 36, 26, compared with the 23d. *Who hath enjoined him his way, or who can say thou hast wrought iniquity? Behold God is great and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out.* Eternity sets God above our enquiries and censures. Infants of a day old are not able to understand the acts of wise and gray heads. Shall we, that are of so short a being and understanding as yesterday, presume to measure the motions of eternity by our scanty intellects? We that cannot foresee an unexpected accident which falls in to blast a well laid de-

sign, and run a ship many leagues back from the intended harbour. We cannot understand the reason of things we see done in time, the motions of the sea, the generation of rain, the nature of light, the sympathies and antipathies of the creatures; and shall we dare to censure the actions of an eternal God so infinitely beyond our reach? The counsels of a boundless Being are not to be scanned by a silly worm, that hath breathed but a few minutes in the world. Since eternity cannot be comprehended in time, it is not to be judged by a creature of time. *Let us remember to magnify his works which we behold*, because he is eternal, which is the exhortation of Elihu, *Job 36. 24.* enforced by this doctrine of God's eternity; and not accuse any work of him who is the Ancient of days, or presume to direct him, of whose eternity we come infinitely short. Whenever therefore any unworthy notion of the counsels and works of God is suggested to us by Satan, or our own corrupt hearts; let us look backward to God's eternal, and our own short duration, and silence ourselves with the same question wherewith God put a stop to the reasoning of Job, *chap. 38. 4, Where wast thou, when I laid the foundations of the earth?* and reprove ourselves for our curiosity; since we are of so short a standing, and were nothing when the eternal God laid the first stone of the world.

4. What a folly and boldness is there in sin, since an *eternal God is offended thereby?* All sin is aggravated by God's eternity. The blackness of the heathen idolatry was in changing the glory of the *incorruptible God, Rom. 1. 23*, erecting resemblances of him contrary to his immortal nature; as if the eternal God, whose life is as unlimited as eternity, were like those creatures whose beings are measured by the short ell of time, which are of a corruptible nature, and daily passing on to corruption: they could not really deprive God of his glory and immortality, but they did in estimation. There is in the nature of every sin a tendency to reduce God to a not being. He that thinks unworthily of God, or acts unworthily towards him, does, as much as in him lies, sully and destroy these two perfections of his, immutability

and eternity; and treats him as if he were as contemptible as a creature that were but of yesterday, and shall not remain in being to-morrow.

He that would put an end to God's glory by darkening it, would put an end to God's life by destroying it. He that should love a beast with as great an affection as he loves a man, contemns a rational nature; and he that loves a perishing thing with the same affection he should love an everlasting God, contemns his eternity; he debases the duration of God below that of the world. The low valuation of God speaks him in his esteem no better than withering grass, or a gourd, which lasts for a night; and the creature which possesses his affection, to be a good that lasts for ever. How foolish then is every sin, that tends to destroy a Being that cannot destroy or desert himself; a Being, without without whose eternity the sinner himself could not have had the capacity of a being to affront him? How base is that, which would not let the works of God remain in their established posture? How much more base in not enduring the fountain and glory of all being, that would not only put an end to the beauty of the world, but the eternity of God?

5. How dreadful is it to lie under the *stroke of an eternal God?* His eternity is as great a terror to him that hates him, as it is a comfort to him that loves him; because he is the *living God, an everlasting King, the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation*, Jer. 10. 10. Though God be least in their thoughts, and is made light of in the world; yet the thoughts of God's eternity, when he comes to judge the world, shall make the slighters of him tremble: that the judge and punisher lives for ever, is the greatest grievance to a soul in misery, and adds an inconceivable weight to it, above what the infinity of God's executive power could do without that duration: His eternity makes the punishment more dreadful than his power; his power makes it sharp, but his eternity renders it perpetual; ever to endure, is the sting at the end of every lash. And how sad is it to think that God lays his eternity, as a pledge, for the punish-

ment of obstinate sinners, and engageth by an oath, that he will *whet his glittering sword*, that his *hand shall take hold of judgment*, that he will *render vengeance to his enemies, and a reward to them that hate him;* a reward proportioned to the greatness of their offences, and the glory of an eternal God? *Deut.* 32. 40, 41, *I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever*, i. e. as surely as I live for ever, *I will whet* my glittering sword. As none can convey good with a perpetuity, so none can convey evil with such an eternal being as God. It is a great loss to lose a ship richly fraught in the bottom of the sea, never to be cast upon the shore; but how much greater is it, to lose eternally a sovereign God, which we were capable of eternally enjoying, and undergo an evil as durable as that God we slighted, and were in a possibility of avoiding? The miseries of men after this life are not eased, but sharpened by the life and eternity of God.

Secondly, the immutability of God is a source of *consolation*. What foundation of comfort can we have in any of God's attributes, were it not for his infiniteness and eternity; though he be *merciful, good, wise, faithful?* What support could there be, if they were perfections belonging to a corruptible God? What hopes of a resurrection to happiness can we have, or of the duration of it; if that God that promised it were not immortal to continue it, as well as powerful to effect it? His power were not almighty, if his duration were not eternal.

1. If God be eternal, *his covenant will be so.* It is founded upon the eternity of God; the oath whereby he confirms it, is by his life: since there is none greater than himself, he swears by *himself*, or by his own life, which he engageth together with his eternity for the full performance; so that if he lives for ever, the covenant shall not be disannulled; it is an *immutable counsel, Heb.* 6. 13, 16, 17. The immutability of his counsel follows the immutability of his nature. Immutability and eternity go hand in hand together. The promise of eternal life is as ancient as God himself, in regard of the purpose of the promise, or in regard of the promise made to Christ for us. *Eternal life which God promised before the world began, Tit.* 1. 2.

As it hath an *ante-eternity*, so it hath a *post-eternity;* therefore the gospel, which is the new covenant published is termed *Rev.* 14. 6, *the everlasting gospel;* which can no more be altered and perish, than God can change and vanish into nothing: he can as little morally deny his truth, as he can naturally desert his life. The covenant is represented in a green colour, to note its perpetual verdure: the *rainbow*, the emblem of the covenant, *about the throne, was like to an emerald*, a stone of a green colour: whereas the natural rainbow hath many colours; this but one, to signify its eternity, *Rev.* 4. 3.

2. If God be eternal, he being our God in covenant is *an eternal good and possession. This God is our God for ever and ever; He is a dwelling place in all generations.* We shall traverse the world a while, and then arrive at the blessings Jacob wished for Joseph; *Gen.* 49. 26, the *blessings of the everlasting hills.* If an estate of a thousand pounds *per annum* render a man's life comfortable for a short term, how much more may the soul be swallowed up with joy in the enjoyment of the Creator, whose years never fail, who lives for ever to be enjoyed, and can keep us in life for ever to enjoy him? Death indeed will seize upon us by his irreversible order, but the immortal Creator will make him disgorge his prey, and land us in a glorious immortality; our souls at their dissolution, and our bodies at the resurrection, after which they shall remain for ever, and employ the extent of that boundless eternity in the fruition of the sovereign and eternal God: for it is impossible that that the believer, who is united to the immortal God that is from everlasting to everlasting, can ever perish; for being in conjunction with him who is an ever flowing fountain of life, he cannot suffer him to remain in the power of death.

While God is eternal, and always the same, it is not possible that those that partake of his spiritual, should not also partake of his eternal life. It is from the consideration of the endlessness of the years of God that the church comforts herself, that *her children shall continue* and *their seed be established for ever*, *Psal.* 102. 27, 28.

And from the eternity of God, Habakkuk concludes the eternity of believers, *Art not thou from everlasting O Lord my God, my holy one? We shall not die, O Lord, chap.* 1. 12. After they are retired from this world, they shall live for ever with God without any change by the multitude of those imaginable years and ages that shall run for ever. It is that God that hath neither beginning nor end, that is our God; who hath not only immortality in himself, but immortality to give out to others. As he hath abundance of spirit to quicken them, so he hath abundance of immortality to continue them. It is only in the consideration of this a man can with wisdom say, *Soul take thy ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years*, to say it of any other possession, is the greatest folly in the judgment of our Saviour, *Luke* 12. 19, 20. *Mortality shall be swallowed up of immortality: rivers of pleasure* shall be *for evermore.* Death is a word never spoken there by any, never heard by any in that possession of eternity; it is for ever put out as one of Christ's conquered enemies. The happiness depends upon the presence of God, with whom believers shall be for ever present. Happiness cannot perish as long as God lives: He *is the first and the last;* the first of all delights, nothing before him; the last of all pleasures, nothing beyond him: a paradise of delights in every point without, a flaming sword.

3. The enjoyment of God will be as *fresh and glorious after many ages, as it was at first.* God is eternal, and eternity knows no change; there will then be the fullest possession without any decay in the object enjoyed. There can be nothing past, nothing future; time neither adds to it, nor detracts from it; that infinite fulness of perfection which flourisheth in him now, will flourish eternally, without any discolouring of it in the least by those innumerable ages that shall run to eternity, much less any despoiling him of them. *He is the same in his endless duration.* As God is, so will his eternity be, without succession, without division: the *fulness of joy* will be always present; without past to be thought of with regret for being gone; without future to be expected

with tormenting desires. When we enjoy God, we enjoy him in his eternity without any change, an entire possession of all together, without the passing away of pleasures that may be wished to return, or expectation of future joys which might be desired to hasten. Time is fluid, but eternity is stable, and after many ages, the joys will be as savoury and satisfying, as if they had been but a moment first tasted by our hungry appetites.

When the glory of the Lord shall rise upon you, it shall be so far from ever setting, that after millions of years are expired, as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore, the sun, in the light of whose countenance you shall live, shall be as bright as at the first appearance. He will be so far from ceasing to flow, that he will flow as strong, as full, as at the first communication of himself in glory to the creature. God therefore, as sitting upon his throne of grace, and acting according to his covenant, is like a *jasper-stone*, which is of a green colour, a colour always delightful, because God is always vigorous, and flourishing; a pure act of life, sparkling new and fresh rays of life and light to the creature, flourishing with a perpetual spring, and contenting the most capacious desire; forming your interest, pleasure, and satisfaction, with an infinite variety, without any change or succession: he will have variety to increase delights, and eternity to perpetuate them; this will be the fruit of the enjoyment of an infinite, an eternal God. He is not a cistern but a fountain, wherein water is always living and never putrifies.

4. If God be eternal, here is a strong ground of *comfort against all the distresses of the church, and the threats of the church's enemies.* God's abiding for ever, is the plea Jeremiah makes for his return to his forsaken church, *Lament. 5. 20, Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever, thy throne is from generation to generation.* The church is weak; created things are easily cut off? What prop is there, but God that lives for ever? What though Jerusalem lost its bulwarks, the temple were defaced, the land wasted; yet the God of Jerusalem sits upon an eternal throne, and from everlasting to everlasting there is no di-

minution of his power. The prophet intimates in this complaint, that it is not agreeable to God's eternity to forget his people, to whom he hath from eternity bore good will. In the greatest confusions, the church's eyes are to to be fixed upon the eternity of God's throne, where he sits as governor of the world. No creature can take any comfort in this perfection, but the church; other creatures depend upon God, but the church is united to him.

The first discovery of the name, *I am*, which signifies the divine eternity as well as immutability, was for the comfort of the oppressed Israelites in Egypt. It was then published from the secret place of the Almighty, as the only strong cordial to refresh them. It hath not yet, it shall not ever, lose its virtue in any of the miseries that have or shall successively befall the church. It is a comfort as durable as the God whose name it is. He is still *I am*, and the same to the church, as he was then to his Israel. His spiritual Israel have a greater right to the glories of it, than the carnal Israel could have. No oppression can be greater than theirs; what was a comfort suited to that distress, hath the same suitableness to every other oppression. It was not a temporary name, but a name for ever; his *memorial to all generations*, and reacheth to the church of the Gentiles, with whom he treats as the God of Abraham, ratifying that covenant by the Messiah, which he made with Abraham the Father of the faithful.

The church's enemies are not to be feared; they may spring as the grass, but soon after must wither by their own inward principles of decay, or are cut down by the hand of God. They may be instruments of the anger of God, but *they shall be scattered as the workers of iniquity by the hand of the Lord, that is high for evermore*, and is engaged by his promise, to preserve a church in the world. *Psal* 92. 7, 8, 9. They may threaten, but their breath may vanish, as soon as their threatenings are pronounced; for they carry their breath in no surer a place than their own nostrils, upon which the eternal God can put his hand, and sink them in a moment with all their rage.

Do the prophets and instructors of the church *live for ever?* No. Shall then the adversaries and disturbers of the church live for ever? They shall vanish as a shadow; their being depends upon the eternal God of the faithful, and the everlasting judge of the wicked. He that inhabits eternity, is above them that inhabit mortality, and must, whether they will or no, *say to corruption, thou art my father; and to the worm, thou art my mother, and my sister.* When they will act with a confidence, as if they were living gods, he will not be united, but evidence himself to be a living God above them. Why then should mortal men be feared in their frowns, when an immortal God hath promised protection in his word, and lives for ever to perform it?

5. Hence follows another comfort; since God is eternal, he hath power to be *as good as his word.* His promises are established upon his eternity, and this perfection is a main ground of trust, *Isa.* 26. 4, *Trust in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.* פיה יהוה עוד עולם טם His name is doubled, that name Jah, and Jehovah, which was always the strength of his people; and not a single one, but the strength or rock of eternities; not a failing but an eternal truth and power; that as his strength is eternal, so our trust in him should imitate his eternity in its perpetuity; and therefore in the despondency of his people, as if God had forgot his promises, and made no account of them, and were weary of doing good, he calls them to reflect on what they had heard of his eternity, which is attended with immutablility, who hath an infinity of power to perform his will, and of understanding to judge of the right seasons of it. His wisdom, will, and truth, have always been, and will to eternity be the same. He wants not life, any more than love, for ever to help us; since his word is past, he will never fail us; since his life continues, he can never be out of a capacity to relieve us: and therefore when ever we foolishly charge him by our distrustful thoughts, we forget his love, which made the promise, and his eternal life, which can accomplish it. As his word is the ground of our trust, and his truth is the assurance of

his sincerity, so his eternity is the assurance of his ability to perform his word. *His word stands for ever, Isa.* 40. 8.

A man may be my friend this day, and be in another world to-morrow; and though he be never so sincere in his word, yet death forbids the execution of it. But as God cannot die, so he cannot lie; because he is the Eternity of *Israel.* 1 *Sam.* 15. 29. *The strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent,* נצח perpetuity or eternity of Israel. Eternity implies immutability; we could have no ground for our hopes, if we knew him not to be longer lived than ourselves. The Psalmist beats off our trust in men, *because their breath goes forth, they return to their earth, and in that day their thoughts perish, Psalm* 146. 3, 4. And if the God of Jacob were like them, what happiness could we have in making him our help? As his sovereignty in giving precepts had not been a strong ground of obedience, without considering him as an eternal law-giver, who could maintain his rights; so his kindness in making the promises, had not been a strong ground of confidence, without considering him as an eternal promiser, whose thoughts, and whose life can never perish. * And this may be one reason, why the Holy Ghost mentions so often the *post*-eternity of God, and so little his *ante*-eternity: because that is the strongest foundation of our faith and hope, which respects chiefly that which is future, and not that which is past; yet indeed no assurance of his after-eternity can be had, if his *ante*-eternity be not certain. If he had a beginning, he may have an end; and if he had any change in his nature, he might have in his counsels; but since all the resolves of God are as himself is, eternal, and all the promises of God are the fruits of his counsel, therefore they cannot be changed: if he should change them for the better, he would not have been eternally wise to know what was best; if for the worse, he had not been eternally good or just.

Men may break their promises, because they are

* Crellius de Deo cap. 18. p. 44, 45.

made without foresight; but God, that inhabits eternity, foreknows all things, that shall be done under the sun, as if they had been then acting before him; and nothing can intervene, or work a change in his resolves; because the least circumstances were eternally foreseen by him. Though there may be variations, and changes in our sight, the winds may tack about and every hour new and cross accidents may happen; yet the eternal God, who is eternally true to his word, sits at the helm, and the *winds and the waves obey him.* And though he should defer his promise a *thousand years,* yet he is *not slack:* for he considers it but a day to his eternity; and who would not with comfort stay a day in expectation of a considerable advantage?

Thirdly, we improve the subject for exhortation. 1. *To something which concerns us in ourselves.* 2. *To something which concerns us with respect to God.*

(1.) *To something which concerns us in our selves.*

1. Let us be deeply affected with our *sins long since committed.* Though they are past with us, they are in regard of God's eternity present with him; there is no succession in eternity, as there is in time. All things are before God at once; our sins are before him, as if committed this moment, though committed long ago. As he is what he is in regard of duration, so he knows what he knows in regard of knowledge. As he is not more than he was, nor shall not be any more than he is, so he always knew what he knows, and shall not cease to know what he now knows. As himself, so his knowledge is one indivisible point of eternity. He knows nothing, but what he did know from eternity; he shall know no more for the future, than he now knows. Our sins being present with him in his eternity, should be present with us in our regard of remembrance of them, and sorrow for them.

What though many years are elapsed, much time run out, and our iniquities almost blotted out of our memory? yet since a thousand years are in God's sight, and in regard of his eternity, but as a day, *Psal.* 90. 4, they are before him. For suppose a man were as old as the

world, above five thousand six hundred years; the sins committed five thousand years ago, are, according to that rule, but as if they were committed five days ago; so that sixty two years, are but as an hour and a half, and the sins committed forty years since, are as if they were committed but this present hour. But if we go further, and consider them but *as a watch of the night*, about three hours, for the night consisting of twelve hours, was divided into set watches, then a thousand years are but as three hours in the sight of God; and then sins committed sixty years ago, are but as if they were committed within this five minutes. Let none of us set light by the iniquities committed many years ago, and imagine that length of time can wipe out their guilt; no, let us consider them in relation to God's eternity, and excite an inward remorse, as if they had been but the birth of this moment.

2. Let the consideration of God's eternity *abate our pride.* This is the design of the verses following the text, the eternity of God being so sufficient to make us understand our own nothingness, which ought to be one great end of man, especially as fallen. The eternity of God should make us as much disesteem ourselves, as the excellency of God made Job *abhor himself*, *Job.* 42. 5, 6. His excellency should humble us under a sense of our vanity, and his eternity under a sense of the shortness of our duration. If man compares himself with other creatures, he may be too sensible of his greatness, but if he compares himself with God, he cannot be sensible of his baseness.

How totally unable we are to *comprehend this eternity of God.* How little do we know? How little can we know of God's eternity? We cannot fully conceive it, much less express it; we have but a brutish understanding in all those things, as Agur said of himself, *Prov.* 30. 7. * What is infinite and eternal cannot be comprehended by finite and temporary creatures; if it could, it would not be infinite and eternal: for to know a thing, is to know the extent, and cause of it; it is repugnant

* Charrontrois. vent. Liv. 1. chap. 5. p. 17. &c.

to eternity to be known, because it hath no limits, no causes; the most soaring understanding cannot have a proportionable understanding of it. What disproportion is there between a drop of water, and the sea in their greatness and motion? Yet by a drop, we may arrive to a knowledge of the nature of the sea, which is a mass of drops joined together. But the longest duration of times cannot make us know what eternity is; because there is no proportion between time and eternity. The years of God are as numberless, as his *thoughts*, and our minds as far from reckoning the one as the other. If our understandings are too gross to comprehend the majesty of his infinite works, they are much more too short to comprehend the infiniteness of his eternity.

And let us reflect upon *the vast disproportion of our duration to this duration of God.*

We have more of not being than being. We were nothing from an unbegun eternity, and we might have been nothing to an endless eternity, had not God called us into being; and if he please, we may be nothing by as short an annihilating word, as we were something by a creating word. As it is the prerogative of God to be, *I am that I am;* so it is the property of a creature to be, *I am not what I am; I am not* by myself *what I am*, but by the indulgence of another. I was nothing formerly, I may be nothing again, unless he that is *I am*, make me to subsist what I now am. Nothing is as much the title of the creature, as Being is the title of God. Nothing is so holy as God, because nothing hath being as God. *There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none besides thee*, 1 *Sam.* 2. 2. Man's life is an image, a *dream*, which are next to nothing; and if compared with God, worse than nothing; a nullity as well as vanity; because *with God only is the fountain of life, Psal.* 36. 9. The creature is but a drop of life from him, dependent on him. A drop of water is a nothing, if compared with the vast conflux of waters, and numberless drops in the ocean. How unworthy is it for dust and ashes kneaded together in time, to strut against the *Father of eternity?* Much more unworthy for that which is nothing, worse than nothing, to

quarrel with that which is only being, and equal himself with him that inhabits eternity.

What being we have, had a beginning. After an unaccountable eternity was run out, in the very dregs of time, a few years ago we were created, and made of the basest and vilest dross of the world, the slime and dust of the earth; made of that wherewith birds build their nests; made of that which creeping things make their habitation, the beasts trample upon. How monstrous is pride in such a creature, to aspire as if he were the father of eternity, and as eternal as God, and so his own eternity?

What being we have, is but of a short *duration in regard of our life in this world.* Our life is in a constant change, we remain not the same an intire day; youth quickly succeeds childhood, and age as speedily treads upon the heels of youth; there is a continual defluxion of minutes, as there is of sands in a glass. He is as a watch wound up at the beginning of his life, and from that time is running down, till he comes to the bottom; some part of our lives is cut off every day, every minute. Life is but a moment; what is past cannot be recalled; what is future cannot be insured. If we enjoy this moment, we have lost that which is past, and shall presently lose this by the next that is to come.

The short duration of men is set out in scripture by such creatures as soon disappear. A *worm*, that can scarce outlive a winter; grass, that withers by the summer's sun. Life is a *flower*, soon withering; a *vapour*, soon vanishing; a *smoke*, soon disappearing. The strongest man is but compacted dust, the fabric must moulder, the highest mountain falls and comes to nought. Time gives place to eternity, we live now, and die to-morrow. Not a man since the world began, ever lived a day in God's sight; for no man ever lived a thousand years. The longest day of any man's life never amounted to twenty-four hours in the account of divine eternity. A life of so many hundred years, with the addition *he died*, makes up the greatest part of the history of the Patriarchs, *Gen.* 5. And since the life of man hath been curtailed, if any be in the world eighty years, he scarce properly lives sixty

of them, since the fourth part of time is at least consumed in sleep.

A greater difference there is between the duration of God, and that of a creature, than between the life of one for a minute, and the life of one that should live as many years as the whole globe of heaven and earth, if changed into papers, could contain figures: and this life, though but of a short duration according to the period God hath determined, is easily cut off; the treasure of life is deposited in a brittle vessel: a small stone hitting against Nebuchadnezzar's statue, will tumble it down into the grave: a grape stone, the bone of a fish, a small fly in the throat, a moist damp, are enough to destroy an earthly eternity, and reduce it to nothing. What a nothing then is our shortness, if compared with God's eternity? Our frailty, with God's duration? How humble then should perishing creatures be before an eternal God, with whom *our days are as a hand's breadth, and our age as nothing? Psal.* 39. 5. The angels that have been of as long duration as heaven and earth, tremble before him, the heavens melt at his presence; and shall we that are but of yesterday, approach a divine eternity with unhumbled souls, and offer the calves of our lips with the pride of devils, and stand upon our terms with him, without falling upon our faces, with a sense that we are but dust and ashes, and creatures of time? How easily is it to reason out man's humility, but how hard is it to reason man into it?

3. Let the consideration of God's eternity *take off our love and confidence from the world, and the things thereof.* The eternity of God reproaches a pursuit of the world, as preferring a momentary pleasure before an everlasting God; as though a temporal world could be a better supply, than a God whose years never fail. Alas! what is this earth men are so greedy of, and will get, though by blood and sweat? What is this whole earth, if we had the entire possession of it, if compared with the vast heavens, the seat of angels and blessed spirits? It is but as an atom to the greatest mountain, or as a drop of dew to the immense ocean. How foolish is it, to prefer a

drop before the sea, or an atom before the world? The earth is but a point to the sun; the sun with its whole orb, but a little part of the heavens, if compared with the whole fabric. If a man had the possession of all those, there could be no comparison between those that have had a beginning, and shall have an end, and God who is without either of them. Yet, how many are there, that make nothing of the divine eternity, and imagine an eternity of nothing.

The world hath been but of a *short standing*. It is not yet six thousand years since the foundations of it were laid; and therefore it cannot have a boundless excellency, as that God, who hath been from everlasting, doth possess. If Adam had lived to this day, and been as absolute lord of his posterity, as he was of the other creatures, had it been a competent object to take up his heart; had he not been a madman, to have preferred this little created pleasure before an everlasting uncreated God? A thing that had a dependent beginning, before that which had an independent eternity?

The beauties of the world *are transitory and perishing*. The whole world is nothing else but a fluid thing, the fashion of it is a pageantry, *passing away;* though the glories of it might be conceived greater than they are, yet they are not consistent, but transient; there cannot be an entire enjoyment of them; because they grow up, and expire every moment, and slip away, while we are using them. Have we not heard of God's dispersing the greatest empires like *chaff before a whirlwind*, or as smoke out of a chimney; which though it appears as a compacted cloud, as if it would eclipse the sun, is quickly scattered into several parts of the air, and becomes invisible? *Hos.* 13. 3. Nettles have often been heirs to stately palaces, as God threatens Israel. *Hos.* 9. 6. We cannot promise ourselves overnight any thing the next day. A kingdom with the glory of a throne may be cut off in a morning. *Hos.* 10. 15. The new wine may be taken from the mouth, when the vintage is ripe; the devouring locust may snatch away both the hopes of

that, and the harvest. *Joel* 1. 15. They are therefore things which are not, and nothing cannot be a fit object for confidence or affection. *Wilt thou set thy eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings. Prov.* 23. 5. They are not properly beings; because they are not stable, but fluctuating. They are *not*, because they may not be the next moment to us, what they are this; they are but cisterns, not springs, and broken cisterns, not sound and stable; there is no solidity in their substance, nor stability in their duration. What a foolish thing is it then, to prefer a transient felicity, a mere nullity, before an eternal God? What a senseless thing would it be in a man, to prefer the map of a kingdom, which the hand of a child can tear in pieces, before the kingdom shadowed by it; how much more inexcusable is it to value things, that are so far from being eternal, that they are not so much as dusky resemblances of an eternity? Were the things of the world more glorious than they are, yet they are but as a counterfeit sun in a cloud, which comes short of the true sun in the heavens, both in glory and duration; and to esteem them before God, is inconceiveably baser, than if a man should value a parti-coloured bubble in the air, before a durable rock of diamonds. The comforts of this world are as candles, presently extinguished, whereas the felicity that flows from an eternal God, is like the sun, that shines more and more to a perfect day.

They cannot, therefore, be fit for a soul, which was *made to have an interest in God's eternity.* The soul being of a perpetual nature was made for the fruition of an eternal good; without such a good it cannot be perfect. Perfection, that noble object, riseth not from any thing in this world, nor is it a title due to a soul while in this world; it is then they are said to be *made perfect*, when they arrive at that entire conjunction with the eternal God in another life, *Heb.* 12. 23. The soul cannot be ennobled by an acquaintance with these things, or established by a dependence on them, they cannot confer what a rational nature should desire, or supply it with what it wants. The soul hath a resemblance to

God in a *post-eternity*. Why should it be drawn aside by the blandishments of earthly things, to neglect its true establisment, and lacquey after the body, which is but the shadow of the soul, and was made to follow it and serve it? But while it busieth itself altogether in the concerns of a perishing body, and seeks satisfaction in things that glide away, it becomes rather a body than a soul, descends below its nature, reproacheth that God who hath imprinted upon it an image of his own eternity, and loseth the comfort of the eternity of its Creator. How shall the whole world, if our lives were as durable as that, be an happy eternity to us, who have souls, that shall survive all the delights of it, which must be tormented in those flames, that shall fire the whole frame of nature at the general conflagration of the world.

4. Therefore let us *provide for an happy interest in the eternity of God*. Man is made for an eternal state. The soul hath such a perfection in its nature, that it is fit for eternity, and cannot display all its operations but in eternity: to an eternity it must go, and live as long as God himself lives. Things of a short duration are not proportioned to a soul made for an eternal continuance; to see that it be a comfortable eternity, is worth all our care. Man is a forecasting creature, considers not only the present, but the future too, in his provisions for his family; and shall he disgrace his nature, in casting off all consideration of a future eternity? Get possession therefore of the eternal God: *a portion in this life* is the lot of those, who shall be for ever miserable. But God, an *everlasting portion*, is the lot of them that are designed for happiness. *Psa.* 17. 14. and 73. 26.

Time is short. The whole time for which God designed this building of the world is of a little compass; it is a stage erected for rational creatures to act their parts upon for a few thousand years; the greatest part of which time is run out; and then shall time like a rivulet fall into the sea of eternity, from whence it sprung. As time is but a moment of eternity, so it will end in eternity; our advantages consist in the present instant; what is past, never promised a return, and cannot be brought

back by all our vows: What is future, we cannot promise ourselves to enjoy; we may be snatched away before it comes. Every minute that passeth, speaks the fewer remaining till the time of death. And as we are every hour further from our beginning, we are nearer our end. The child born this day grows up, to grow nothing at last. In all ages, there is *but a step between us and death*, 1 *Sam.* 20. 3. The little time that remains for the devil to the day of judgment, envenoms his wrath; he rageth because his time is short, *Rev.* 12, 12. The little time that remains between this moment and our death, should quicken our diligence to inherit the endless and unchangeable eternity of God.

5. *Often meditate on the eternity of God.* The holiness, power, and eternity of God, are the fundamental articles of all religion, upon which the whole body of it leans; his holiness for conformity to him, his power and eternity for the support of faith and hope. The strong and incessant cries of the four beasts, representing that christian church, are *Holy, holy, Lord, God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come*, *Rev.* 4, 8. Though his power is intimated, yet the chiefest are his holiness, three times expressed, and his eternity which is repeated, ver. 9, *who lives for ever and ever.* This ought to be the constant practice in the church of the Gentiles, which this book chiefly respects: the meditation of his converting grace manifested to Paul, delighted the apostle's heart, but not without the triumphant consideration of his immortality and eternity, which are the principal parts of the doxology, *Now unto the King Eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.* 1 *Tim.* 1, 17. It could be no great transport to the spirit to consider him glorious, without considering him immortal. The unconfinedness of his perfections in regard of time, presents the soul with matter of the greatest complacency. The happiness of our souls depends upon his other attributes, but the perpetuity of it upon his eternity. Is it a comfort to view his immense wisdom; his overflowing goodness; his tender mercy; his unerring truth? What comfort were there in any of those, if it were a wisdom that

could be baffled; a goodness that could be damped; a mercy that can expire, and a truth that can perish with the subject of it? Without eternity, what were all his other perfections, but as glorious, yet withering flowers; a great, but a decaying beauty?

By a frequent meditation of God's eternity, we should become more sensible of our ownvanity, and the world's triflingness: How nothing should ourselves, how nothing would all other things appear in our eyes? How coldly should we desire them? How feebly should we place any trust in them? Should we not think ourselves worthy of contempt to doat upon a perishing glory, to expect support from an arm of flesh, when there is an eternal beauty to allure us, an eternal arm to protect us? Asaph, when he considered God *a portion for ever;* thought nothing of the glories of the earth, or the beauties of the created heavens worth his appetite or complacency, but God. *Psal.* 73, 25, 26. Besides, an elevated frame of heart at the consideration of God's eternity, would batter down the strong holds and engines of any temptation. A slight temptation will not know where to find and catch hold of a soul high and hid in a meditation of it; and if it doth, there will not be wanting from hence preservatives to resist and conquer it. What transitory pleasures will not the thoughts of God's eternity stifle? When this work employs a soul, it is too great to suffer it to descend to listen to a sleeveless errand from hell or the world. The wanton allurements of the flesh will be put off with indignation. The proffers of the world will be ridiculous when they are cast into the balance with the eternity of God, which abiding in our thoughts, we shall not be so easy a prey for the fowler's snare. Let us therefore often meditate upon this, but not in a bare speculation without engaging our affections, and making every notion of the divine eternity end in a suitable impression upon our hearts. This would be much like the disciples *gazing upon the heavens,* at the *ascension* of their master, while they forgot the practice of his orders, *Acts* 1, 11. We may else find something of the nature of God; and lose ourselves, not only in eternity, but to eternity.

(2.) And hence the second part of the exhortation is *to something which concerns us with a respect to God.*

1. If God be eternal, how worthy is he of our *choicest affections, and strongest desires of communion with him?* Is not every thing to be valued according tothe greatness of its being? How then should we love him, who is not only lovely in his nature, but eternally lovely; having from everlasting all those perfections centered in himself, which appear in time? If every thing be lovely by how much the more it partakes of the nature of God, who is the chief good, how much more infinitely lovely is God, who is superior to all other goods, and eternally so? Not a God of a few minutes, months, years, or millions of years; not of the dregs of time, or the top of time, but of eternity; above time, inconceivably immense beyond time: the loving him infinitely, perpetually, is an act of homage due to him for his eternal excellency. We may give him the one, since our souls are immortal, though we cannot the other, because they are finite. Since he encloseth in himself all the excellencies of heaven and earth for ever, he should have an affection, not only of time in this world, but of eternity in the future; and if we do not owe him a love for what we are by him, we owe him a love for what he is in himself; and more for what he is, than for what he is to us: he is more worthy of our affections, because he is the eternal God, than because he is our Creator; because he is more excellent in his nature than in his transient actions.

The beams of his goodness to us, are to direct our thoughts and affections to him; but his own eternal excellency ought to be the ground and foundation of our affections to him. And truly, since nothing but God is eternal, nothing but God is worth loving; and we do but a just right to our love, to fix it upon that which can always possess us, and be possessed by us; upon an object that cannot deceive our affection, and put it out of countenance by a dissolution. And if our happiness consists in being like to God, we should imitate him in loving him as he loves himself, and as long as he loves himself. God cannot do more to himself than

love himself; he can make no addition to his essence; nor can there be any diminution from it. What should we do less to an eternal being, than to bestow affections upon him, like his own to himself: since we can find nothing so durable as himself, for which we should love it?

2. He only is worthy of our *best service. The ancient of days* is to be served before all that are younger than himself; our best obedience is due to him as a God of unconfined excellency: every thing that is excellent deserves veneration suitable to its excellency. As God is infinite, he hath right to a boundless service; as he is eternal, he hath right to perpetual service; as service is a debt of justice upon the account of the excellency of his nature, so perpetual service is as much a debt of justice upon the account of his eternity. If God be infinite and eternal, he merits an honour and comportment from his creatures suited to the unlimited perfection of his nature, and the duration of his being. How worthy is the Psalmist's resolution? *Psalm.* 104, 33, *I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live, I will sing praises to my God while I have any being.* It is the use he makes of the endless duration of the glory of God, and will extend to all other service as well as praise. To serve other things, or to serve ourselves, is too vast a service upon that which is nothing. In devoting ourselves to God, we serve him that is; that was, so as that he never began; is to come, so as that he never shall end; by whom all things are what they are; who hath both eternal knowledge to remember our service, and eternal goodness to reward it.

THE

IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

Psal. 102. 26, 27.

THEY SHALL PERISH, BUT THOU SHALT ENDURE; YEA, ALL OF THEM SHALL WAX OLD AS A GARMENT; AS A VESTURE SHALT THOU CHANGE THEM, AND THEY SHALL BE CHANGED: BUT THOU ART THE SAME, AND THY YEARS SHALL HAVE NO END.

PART I.

IMMUTABILITY OF GOD'S ESSENCE, NATURE, AND PERFECTIONS.

Immutability a perfection of God—The glory of all his attributes—Necessarily pertains to the divine nature—In what respects he is immutable—In his being—In his knowledge—In his will and purpose—Can be no reason for any change in the will of God—God is unchangeable as to place.

THIS Psalm contains a complaint of a people pressed with a great calamity; some think of the Jewish church in Babylon; others think the Psalmist here personates mankind lying under a state of corruption, because he wishes for the coming of the Messiah, to accomplish that redemption promised by God, and needed by them. In-

deed, the title of the Psalm is, a *prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the Lord;* whether afflicted with the sense of corruption, or with the sense of oppression. And the redemption by the Messiah, which the ancient church looked upon as the fountain of their deliverance from a sinful or a servile bondage, is in this Psalm spoken of: a set time appointed for the discovery of his mercy to Sion, ver. 13: an appearance in glory to build up Sion, ver. 16: the loosening of the prisoner by redemption, and them that are appointed to death, ver. 20: the calling of the Gentiles, ver. 22: and the latter part of the Psalm, wherein are the verses I have read, is applied to Christ, *Heb.* 1. Whatsoever the design of the Psalm might be, many things are intermingled that concern the kingdom of the Messiah, and redemption by Christ. Some make three parts of the Psalm. 1. A petition plainly delivered, ver. 1, 2. *Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee, &c.* 2. The petition strongly and argumentatively enforced and pleaded, ver. 3. from the misery of the petitioner in himself, and his reproach from his enemies. 3. An acting of faith in the expectation of an answer in the general redemption promised, ver. 12, 13, *But thou O Lord shalt endure for ever; thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Sion; the heathen shall fear thy name.*

The first part is the petition pleaded; the second part is the petition answered in an assurance that there should in time be a full deliverance. *The design of the penman is to confirm the church in the truth of the divine promises; that though the foundations of the world should be razed, and the heavens be folded together, and the whole fabric of nature dissolved; yet the church should continue in its stability, because it stands not upon the changeableness of creatures, but is built upon the immutable rock of the truth of God, which is as little subject to change as his essence.

They shall perish, thou shalt change them. As he

* Pareus.

had before ascribed to God the *foundation of heaven and earth*, ver. 25, so he ascribes to God here the destruction of them: both the beginning and end of the world are here ascertained. There is nothing indeed from the present appearance of things that can demonstrate the cessation of the world. The heaven and earth stand firm; the motions of the heavenly bodies are the same, their beauty is not decayed: individuals corrupt, but the species and kinds remain: the successions of the year observe their due order; but the sin of man renders the change of the present appearance of the world necessary to accomplish the design of God for the glory of his elect. The heavens do not naturally perish, as some fancied an old age of the world, wherein it must necessarily decay as the bodies of animals do; or that the parts of the heavens are broken off by their rubbing one against another in their motion, and falling to the earth, are the seeds of those things that grow up among us. *

The *earth* and *heavens*. He names here the most stable, and the most beautiful parts of the creation, those that are freest from corruptibility and change, to illustrate thereby the immutability of God; that though the heavens and earth have a prerogative of fixedness above other parts of the world, and the creatures that reside below; the heavens remain the same as they were created, and the centre of the earth retains its stability, and are as beautiful and fresh in their age as they were in their youth many years ago, notwithstanding the change of the elements; fire and water being often turned into air, so that there may remain but little of that air which was first created by reason of the continual transmutation; yet this firmness of the *earth* and *heavens*. is not to be regarded in comparison of the unmoveableness of the being of God. As their beauty comes short of the glory of his being, so doth their firmness come short of his stability.

Some by heavens and earth, understand the creatures which reside in the earth, and those which are in the

* Plin. Hist. lib. 2. cap. 3.

air, which is called heaven often in scripture; but the ruin and fall of these being seen every day, had been no fit illustration of the unchangeableness of God. *They shall perish, they shall be changed.* They *may* perish, say some; they have it not from themselves that they do not perish, but from thee, who didst endue them with an incorruptible nature. They shall perish if thou speakest the word. Thou canst with as much ease destroy them as thou didst create them. But the Psalmist speaks not of their possibility, but the certainty of their perishing.

They *shall* perish in their qualities and motion, not in their substance, say others. They shall cease from that motion which is designed properly for the generation and corruption of things in the earth; but in regard of their substance and beauty they shall remain. As when the strings or wheels of a clock or watch are taken off, the material parts remain; though the motion of it, and the use for discovering the time of the day ceaseth.* To *perish*, doth not signify always a falling into nothing, an annihilation, by which both the matter and the form are destroyed; but a ceasing of the present appearance of them; a ceasing to be what they now are, as a man is said to perish when he dies, whereas the better part of man doth not cease to be. The figure of the body moulders away, and the matter of it returns to dust; but the soul being immortal, ceases not to act, when the body by reason of the absence of the soul is incapable of acting. So the heavens shall *perish;* the appearance they now have shall vanish, and a more glorious and incorruptible frame be erected by the power and goodness of God. The dissolution of heaven and earth is meant by the word *perish*, the raising a new frame is signified by the word *changed*, as if the Spirit of God would prevent any wrong meaning of the word *perish*, by alleviating the sense of that by another which signifies only a mutation and change; as when we change a habit and garment, we quit the old to receive the new.

As a garment, as a vesture, thou shalt change them,†

* Coccei, in loc. † Septuag.

ἑλίξεις thou shalt *fold them up.* The heavens are compared to a *curtain*, *Psal.* 104. 2, and shall in due time be folded up as clothes and curtains are. As a garment encompasseth the whole body, so do the heavens encircle the earth. * Some say as a garment is folded up to be laid aside, that when there is need it may be taken again for use; so shalt thou fold up the heavens like a garment, that when they are repaired, thou mayest again stretch them out about the earth; thou shalt fold them up, so that what did appear shall not now appear. It may be illustrated by the metaphor of a scroll or book, *Isa.* 34. 4. *Rev.* 6. 14, *The heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together.* When a book is rolled up or shut, nothing can be read in it till it be opened again; so the face of the heavens, wherein the stars are as letters declaring the glory of God, shall be shut or rolled together, so that nothing shall appear till by its renovation it be opened again. As a garment it shall be changed, not to be used in the same fashion and for the same use again. It seems indeed to be for the worse; an old garment is not changed but into rags, to be put to other uses, and afterwards thrown away. But similitudes are not to be pressed too far; and this will not agree with the new heavens and new earth, physically so, as well as metaphorically. It is not likely the heavens will be put to a worse use than God designed them for in creation: however a change as a garment, speaks not a total corruption, but an alteration of qualities; as a garment not to be used in the same fashion, as before. Here we may observe,

1. That it is probable the world will not be *annihilated but refined.* It shall lose its present form and fashion, but not its foundation: indeed, as God raised it from nothing, so he can reduce it into nothing; yet it doth not appear that God will annihilate it, and utterly destroy both the matter and form of it; part shall be consumed, and part purified, 2 *Pet.* 3. 12, 13, *The heavens shall be on fire and dissolved, nevertheless we according to his promise*

* Estius in Heb. 1.

look for a new heaven and a new earth. They shall be melted down as gold by the artificer, to be refined from its dross, and wrought into a more beautiful fashion, that they may serve the design of God for those that shall reside therein: a new world, wherein righteousness shall dwell; the apostle opposing it thereby to the old world, wherein wickedness resided. The heavens are to be purged, as the vessels that held the sin-offering were to be purified by the fire of the sanctuary. God indeed will take down this scaffold which he hath built to publish his glory. As every individual hath a certain term of its duration; so an end is appointed for the universal nature of heaven and earth, *Isa.* 51, 6, *The heavens shall vanish like smoke,* which disappears. As smoke is resolved and attenuated into air, not annihilated; so shall the world assume a new face, and have a greater clearness and splendour: as the bodies of men dissolved into dust, shall have more glorious qualities at their resurrection; as a vessel of gold is melted down to remove the batterings in it, and receive a more comely form by the skill of the workman. The world was not destroyed by *the deluge:* it was rather washed by water than consumed: so it shall be rather refined by the last fire, than lie under an irrecoverable ruin. Nor is it probable that God would liken the perpetuity of his covenant, and of his spiritual Israel, to the *duration of the heavens,* as he doth, *Jer.* 21. 35, 36, *if they were wholly to depart from before him.* Though that place may only tend to an assurance of a church in the world while the world endures; yet it would be but small comfort, if the happiness of believers should endure no longer than the heavens and earth, if they were to have a total period. Besides *the bodies of the saints must have place for their support to move in, and glorious objects suited to those glorious senses which shall be restored to them;* not in any carnal way, which our Saviour rejects when he saith there is no *eating,* or *drinking,* or *marrying,* &c. in the other world; but whereby they may glorify God; though how, or in what manner their senses shall be used, would be rashness to determine; only something is necessary for the corporeal state of men,

that there may be an employment for their senses as well as their souls.

Again, how could the creature, the world, or any part of it, be said to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the of the Sons of God; *if the whole frame of heaven and earth were to be annihilated? Rom.* 8, 21. The apostle also saith that the creature *waits* with an *earnest expectation for this manifestation of the sons of God*, ver. 19, which would have no foundation, if the whole frame should be reduced to nothing. What joyful expectation can there be in any of a total ruin? How should the creature be capable of partaking in this glorious liberty of the Sons of God? * As the world, for the sin of man, lost its first dignity, and was cursed after the fall, and the beauty bestowed upon it by creation defaced; so it shall recover that ancient glory, when he shall be fully restored by the resurrection to that dignity he lost by his first sin. As man shall be freed from his corruptibility to receive that glory which is prepared for him; so shall the creatures be freed from that imperfection or corruptibility, those stains and spots upon the face of them, to receive a new glory suited to their nature, and answerable to the design of God, when the glorious liberty of the saints shall be accomplished. * As when a prince's nuptials are solemnized, the whole country echoes with joy; so the inanimate creatures, when the time of the marriage of the Lamb is come, shall have a delight and pleasure from that renovation.

The apostle sets forth the whole world as a person groaning, and the scripture is frequent in such metaphors; as when the creatures are said to *wait upon God, and to be troubled; the hills are said to leap and the mountains to rejoice. Psal.* 104, 27, 29. The creature is said to groan, as the heavens are said to declare the glory of God, passively, naturally, not rationally. It is not likely angels are here meant, though they cannot but desire it; since they are affected with the dishonour and reproach cast upon God in the world, they cannot but long for the restoration of

* Hyper in Heb. 1. † Mestræzat sur. Heb. 1.

his honour in the restoration of the creature to its true end. And indeed, the angels are employed to serve man in this sinful state, and cannot but in holiness wish the creature freed from his corruption. Nor is it meant of the new creatures, which have the first fruits of the Spirit; those he brings in afterwards, *groaning and waiting for the adoption;* where he distinguishes the rational creature from the creature he had spoken of before. If he had meant the believing creature that desired the liberty of the sons of God; what need had there been of that additional distinction, *and not only they, but we also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves?* Whereby it seems he means some creatures below rational creatures, since neither angels nor blessed souls can be said to travail in pain, as a woman in travail, as the word signifies, who perform the work joyfully which God sets them upon.*

If the creatures be subject to vanity by the sin of man, they shall also partake of a happiness by the restoration of man. The earth hath borne thorns and thistles, and venomous beasts; the air hath had its tempests and infectious qualities; the water hath caused its floods and deluges. The creature hath been abused to luxury and intemperance, and been tyrannized over by man, contrary to the end of its creation. It is convenient that some time should be allotted for the creature's attaining its true end, and that it may partake of the peace of man, as it hath done of the fruits of his sin; otherwise it would seem that sin had prevailed more than grace, and would have had more power to deface, than grace to restore things into their due order.

Again, upon what account should the Psalmist exhort the heavens to rejoice, and the earth to be glad, when God comes to judge the world with righteousness, *if they should be annihilated and sunk for ever into nothing?* It would seem, saith Daille, to be an impertinent figure, if the judge of the world brought them to a total destruction; an entire ruin could not be matter of triumph to creatures,

* Mestræzat, sur Heb. 1.

who naturally have that instinct or inclination put into them by their Creator to preserve themselves, and to affect their own preservation.

Again, the Lord *is said to rejoice in his works; Psal.* 104. 31, *The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever; the Lord shall rejoice in his works;* not *hath,* but *shall* rejoice in his works: in the works of creation; which the Psalmist had enumerated, and which is the whole scope of the Psalm. And he intimates that it is part of the glory of the Lord which *endures for ever,* that is, his manifestative glory, to rejoice in his works: the glory of the Lord must be understood with reference to the creation he had spoken of before. How short was that joy God had in his works after he had sent them beautified out of his hand? How soon did *he repent,* not only *that he had made man,* but was *grieved at the heart* also, that he made the other creatures which man's sin had disordered? What joy can God have in them, since the curse upon the entrance of sin into the world, remains upon them? If they are to be annihilated upon the full restoration of his holiness, what time will God have to rejoice in the other works of creation?

It is the joy of God to see all his works in their due order; every one pointing to their true end; marching together in their excellency, according to his first intendment in their creation. Did God create the world to perform its end only for one day; scarce so much, if Adam fell the very first day of his creation? What would have been their end, if Adam had been confirmed in a state of happiness as the angels were, will probably be answered and performed upon the compleat restoration of man to that happy state from whence he fell. What artificer compiles a work by his skill but to rejoice in it? And shall God have no joy from the works of his hands? Since God can only rejoice in goodness, the creatures must have that goodness restored to them which God pronounced them to have at the first creation, and which he ordained them for, before he can again rejoice in his works. The goodness of the creatures is the glory and joy of God.

Inference 1. We may infer from hence, *what a base and vile thing sin is, which lays the foundation of the world's change.* Sin brings it to decrepid age; sin overturned the whole work of God; so that to render it useful to its proper end, there is a necessity of a kind of a new creating it. This causes God to fire the earth for a purification of it from that infection and contagion brought upon it by the apostacy and corruption of man: it hath served sinful man, and therefore must undergo a purging flame to be fit to serve the holy and righteous Creator. As sin is so riveted in the body of man, that there is need of a change by death to raze it out; so hath the curse for sin got so deep into the bowels of the world, that there is need of a change by fire to refine it for its master's use. Let us look upon sin with no other notion than as the object of God's hatred, the cause of his grief in the creatures, and the spring of the pain and ruin of the world.

2. *How foolish a thing is it to set our hearts upon that which shall perish, and be no more what it is now?* The heavens and earth, the most solid and firm parts of the creation, shall not continue in the posture they are; they must perish and undergo a refining change. How feeble and weak are the other parts of the creation, the little creatures walking upon and fluttering about the world, that are perishing and dying every day; and we scarce see them clothed with life and beauty this day, but they wither and are despoiled of all the next. And are such frail things fit objects for our everlasting spirits and affections? Though the daily employment of the *heavens* is the *declaration of the glory of God*, yet neither this, nor their harmony, order, beauty, amazing greatness and glory, shall preserve them from dissolution at the presence of the Lord: though they have remained in the same posture from the creation till this day, and are of so great antiquity; yet they must bow down to a change before the will and word of their Creator. And shall we rest upon that which shall vanish like smoke? Shall we take any creature for our support like ice, that will break under our feet, and must by the order of their Lord Creator deceive our hopes? Perishing things can be no support to

the soul; if we would have rest, we must run to God and rest in God. How contemptible should that be to us, whose fashion shall pass away, which shall not endure long in its present form and appearance. Contemptible as a rest, not contemptible as the work of God; contemptible as an end, not contemptible as a means to attain our end. If these must be changed, how unworthy are other things to be the centre of our souls, that change in our very using of them, and slide away in our very enjoyment of them?

Thou art the same. The essence of God with all the perfections of his nature are pronounced the same, without any variation from eternity to eternity: so that the text doth not only assert the eternal duration of God, but his immutability in that duration. His eternity is signified in that expression *thou shalt endure;* his immutability in this, *thou art the same.** To endure, argues indeed his immutability as well as eternity: for what endures, is not changed, and what is changed, doth not endure: but *thou art the same*† doth more fully signify it: he could not be the same if he could be changed into any other thing than what he is; the psalmist therefore puts, not thou *hast been* or *shalt be*, but *thou art* the same without any alteration; thou art the same, that is, the same God, the same in essence and nature, the same in will and purpose; thou dost change all other things as thou pleasest; but thou art immutable in every respect, and receivest no *shadow of change.*

‡The psalmist here alludes to the name *Jehovah, I am;* and doth not only ascribe immutability to God, but exclude every thing else from partaking in that perfection. All things else are tottering; God sees all other things in continual motion under his feet, like water passing away and no more seen, while he remains fixed and immoveable: his wisdom and power, his knowledge and will are alway the same. His essence can receive no alteration, neither by itself nor by any external cause; whereas other

* Estius in Heb. 1. † Chrysostom. אתה הוא

Ἀλλοιώσεως κρείττων, above all change, Theodor

things either naturally decline to destruction, pass from one term to another till they come to their period; or shall at the last day be wrapped up, after God hath completed his will in them and by them; as a man doth a garment he intends to repair and transform to another use. So that in the text, God as immutable is opposed to all creatures as perishing and changeable.

Doct. God is unchangeable *in his essence, nature, and perfections.* Immutability and eternity are linked together; and indeed true eternity is true immutability, whence eternity is defined the possession of an immutable life. Yet immutability differs from eternity in our conception: immutability respects the essence or existence of a thing, eternity the duration of a being in that state; or rather * *Immutability is the state itself*, eternity is the measure of that state. A thing is said to be changed, when it is otherwise now in regard of nature, state, will, or any quality than it was before; when either something is added to it or taken from it; when it either loses or acquires: but now it is the essential property of God, not to have any accession to, or diminution of, his essence or attributes, but to remain entirely the same. He wants nothing, he loses nothing, but uniformly exists by himself, without any new nature, new thoughts, new will, new purposes, or new place.

† This unchangeableness of God was anciently represented by the figure of a cube, a piece of metal or wood framed four-square; when every side is exactly of the same equality, cast it which way you will, it will always be in the same posture, because it is equal to itself in all its dimensions: he was therefore said to be the centre of all things, and other things the circumference; the centre is never moved while the circumference is; it remains immoveable in the midst of the circle: *There is no variableness nor shadow of turning with him. James* 1. 17. The moon hath her spots, so hath the sun; there is a mixture of light and darkness; it hath its changes; sometimes it is in the increase, sometimes in the wane;

* Gamacheus. † Amyraut. sur Heb. 9. p 153.

it is always either gaining or losing, and by the turnings and motions, either of the heavenly bodies or of the earth, it is in its eclipse, by the interposition of the earth between it and the sun. The sun also hath its diurnal and annual motion; it rises and sets, and puts on a different face. It doth not alway shine with a noon-day light; it is sometimes veiled with clouds and vapours; it is always going from one tropic to another, whereby it makes various shadows on the earth, and produces the various seasons of the year; is it not always in our hemisphere, nor doth it always shine with an equal force and brightness in it. But such shadows and variations have no place in the eternal Father of Lights; he hath not the least spot or diminution of brightness; nothing can cloud him or eclipse him. For the better understanding this perfection of God,

I shall premise three things.

1. The immutability of God is *a perfection.* Immutability considered in itself, without relation to other things, is not a perfection. It is the greatest misery and imperfection of the evil angels, that they are immutable in malice against God. But as God is infinite in essence, infinitely good, wise, holy; so it is a perfection necessary to his nature, that he should be immutably all this; all excellency, goodness, wisdom, immutably all that he is; without this he would be an imperfect being. Are not the angels in heaven, who are confirmed in a holy and happy state, more perfect than when there was a possibility of their committing evil and becoming miserable? Are not the saints in heaven, whose wills by grace unalterably cleave to God and goodness; more perfect than if they were as Adam in Paradise, capable of losing their felicity, as well as preserving it? We count a rock in regard of its stability, more excellent than the dust of the ground, or a feather that is tossed about with every wind; is it not also the perfection of the body to have a constant tenor of health, and the glory of a man not to warp aside from what is just and right, by the persuasions of any temptations?

2. Immutability is a glory belonging *to all the Attri-*

butes of God. It is not a single perfection of the divine nature, nor is it limited to particular objects thus and thus disposed. Mercy and justice have their distinct objects, and distinct acts; mercy is conversant about a penitent, justice about an obstinate sinner. In our notion and conception of the divine perfections, his perfections are different. The wisdom of God is not his power, nor his power his holiness; but immutability is the centre wherein they all unite. There is not one perfection but may be said to be, and truly is immutable; none of them will appear so glorious without this beam, this sun of immutability, which renders them highly excellent without the least shadow of imperfection. How cloudy would his blessedness be, if it were changeable? How dim his wisdom, if it might be obscured? How feeble his power if it were capable of being sickly and languishing? How would mercy lose its lustre, if it could change into wrath; and justice much of its dread, if it could be turned into mercy, while the object of justice remains unfit for mercy, and one that hath need of mercy continues only fit for the divine fury? But unchangeableness is the thread that runs through the whole web; it is the enamel of all the rest; none of them without it could look with a triumphant aspect.

His power is unchangeable; *in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;* his *mercy and his holiness endure for ever*; he never could, nor ever can, look upon iniquity. He is a rock in the righteousness of his ways, the truth of his word, the holiness of his proceedings, and the rectitude of his nature: All are expressed, *Deut.* 32. 4, *He is a rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.* All that we consider in God is unchangeable; for his essence and his properties are the same, and therefore what is necessarily belonging to the essence of God, belongs also to every perfection of the nature of God; none of them can receive any addition or diminution. From the unchangeableness of his nature, the Apostle James, chap. 1. 17, infers the unchangeableness of his holiness; and himself, in *Mal.* 3, 6, asserts the unchangeableness of his counsel.

3. Unchangeableness, *necessarily pertains to the nature of God.* It is of the same necessity with the rectitude of his nature; he can no more be changeable in his essence, than he can be unrighteous in his actions. God is a necessary Being: he is necessarily what he is, and therefore is unchangeablywhat he is. Mutability belongs to contingency. If any perfection of his nature could be separated from him, he would cease to be God, what did not possess the whole nature of God, could not have the essence of God, it is reciprocated with the nature of God. Whatsoever is immutable by nature, is God; whatsoever is God, is immutable by nature. Some creatures are immutable by his grace and power:* God is holy, happy, wise, good, by his essence; angels and men are made holy, wise, happy, strong, and good, by qualities and graces.

The holiness, happiness, and wisdom of saints and angels, as they had a beginning, so they are capable of increase and diminution, and of an end also; for their standing is not from themselves, or from the nature of created strength, holiness, or wisdom, which in themselves are apt to fail, and finally to decay; but from the stability and confirmation they have by the gift and grace of God. The heaven and earth shall be changed, and after that renewal and reparation, they shall not be changed. Our bodies after the resurrection shall not be changed; but for ever be *made conformable to the glorious body of Christ;* but this is by the powerful grace of God: so that indeed those things may be said afterwards rather to be unchanged than unchangeable, because they are not so by nature, but by sovereign dispensation. As creatures have not necessary beings, so they have not necessary immutability. Necessity of being, and therefore immutability of being, belongs by nature only to God; otherwise if there were any change in God he would be sometimes what he was not, and would cease to be what he was; which is against the nature, and indeed against the natural notion of a Deity.

* Archbold. Serm.

Let us see then, 1. *In what respects God is immutable.*—2. *Prove that God is immutable.*—3. *That this is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature.*—4. *Some propositions to clear the unchangeableness of God from any thing that seems contrary to it.*—5. *The Use.*

First, in what *respects God is unchangeable.*

1. *God is unchangeable in his essence.* He is unalterably fixed in his being, that not a particle of it can be lost from it, not a mite added to it. If a man continue in being as long as *Methuselah*, nine hundred and sixty nine years; yet there is not a day, nay an hour, wherein there is not some alteration in his substance; though no substantial part is wanting, yet there is an addition to him by his food, a diminution of something by his labour; he is always making some acquisition, or suffering some loss. But in God there can be no alteration, by the accession of any thing to make his substance greater or better, or by diminution to make it less or worse. He who hath no being from another, cannot but be always what he is: God is the first being, an independent being; he was not produced of himself, or of any other, but by nature always has been; and therefore cannot by himself, or by any other be changed from what he is in his own nature. That which is not, may as well assume to itself a being, as he, who hath and is all being, have the least change from what he is. Again, because he is a Spirit, he is not subject to those mutations which are found in corporeal and bodily natures; because he is an absolutely simple Spirit, not having the least particle of composition, he is not capable of those changes which may be in created Spirits.

If his essence were mutable, *God would not truly be;* It could not be truly said by himself, *I am that I am*, if he were such a thing or being at this time, and a different being at another time.

Whatsoever is changed, properly is not, because it doth not remain to be what it was. That which is changed was something, is something, and will be something; a being remains to that thing which is changed;

yet though it may be said such a thing is, yet it may be also said such a thing is not, because it is not what it was in its first being; it is not now what it was, it is now what it was not; it is another thing than it was, it was another thing than it is; it will be another thing than what it is or was: it is indeed a being, but a different being from what it was before. But if God were changed, it could not be said of him that *he is*, but it might also be said of him that *he is not;* or if he were changeable or could be changed, it might be said of him he is, but he will not be what he is; or he may not be what he is, but there will be or may be some difference in his being, and so God would not be *I am that I am;* for though he would not cease utterly to be, yet he would cease to be what he was before.

Again, if his essence were mutable, *he could not be perfectly blessed, and fully rejoice in himself.* If he changed for the better, he could not have an infinite pleasure in what he was before the change, because he was not infinitely blessed; and the pleasure of that state could not be of a higher kind than the state itself, or at least the apprehension of happiness in it. If he changed for the worse, he could not have a pleasure in it after the change; for according to the diminution of his state, would be the decrease of his pleasure: his pleasure could not be infinite before the change, if he changed for the better; it could not be infinite after the change, if he changed for the worse. If he changed for the better, he would not have had an infinite goodness of being before; and not having an infinite goodness of being, he would have a finite goodness of being; for there is no medium between finite and infinite: then though the change were for the better, yet being finite before, something would be still wanting to make him infinitely blessed; because being finite, he could not change to that which is infinite; for finite and infinite are extremes so distant; that they can never pass into one another; that is, that which is finite can never become infinite, or that which is infinite become finite: so that supposing him mutable, his es-

sence in no state of change, could furnish him with an infinite peace and blessedness.

Again, if God's essence be changed, *he either increaseth or diminisheth* * : whatsoever is changed, either gains by receiving something larger and greater than it had in itself before, or gains nothing by being changed. If the former, then it receives more than itself, more than it had in itself before. The Divine Nature cannot be encreased; for whatsoever receives any thing than what it had in itself before, must necessarily receive from another, because nothing can give to itself that which it hath not. But God cannot receive from another what he hath not already, because whatsoever other things possess, is derived from him, and therefore contained in him, as the fountain contains the virtue in itself which it conveys to the streams; so that God cannot gain anything: if a thing that is changed gain nothing by that change, it loseth something of what it had before in itself; and this loss must be by itself or some other.

God cannot receive any loss from any thing in himself; he cannot will his own diminution; that is repugnant to every nature; he may as well will his own destruction as his own decrease; every decrease is a partial destruction: but it is impossible for God to die any kind of death, to have any resemblance of death, for he is immortal, and *he only hath immortality*, therefore impossible to be diminished in any particle of his essence; nor can he be diminished by any thing in his own nature, because his infinite simplicity admits of nothing distinct from himself, or contrary to himself. All decreases come from something contrary to the nature of that which doth decrease. Whatsoever is made less than itself, was not truly *unum*, one and simple, because that which divides itself in separation was not the same in conjunction. Nor can he be diminished by any other without himself; because nothing is superior to God, nothing stronger than God which can oppress him: but whatsoever is changed,

* Hugo Victorin. in petavio.

is weaker than that which changeth it, and sinks under a power it cannot successfully resist; weakness belongs not to the Deity. *

Nor, lastly, can God change from a state wherein he is to another state equal to the former, as men in some cases may do; for in passing from one state to another equal to it, something must be parted with which he had before, that some other thing may accrue to him as a recompense for that loss to make him equal to what he was. This recompense then he had not before, though he had something equal to it. And in this case it could not be said by God *I am that I am*, but I am equal to what I was; for in this case there would be a diminution and increase which cannot be in God, as was shewed before. Again, *God is of himself, from no other* †: Natures, which are made by God, may increase, because they began to be; they may decrease, because they were made of nothing, and so tend to nothing; the condition of their original leads them to defect, and the power of their Creator brings them to increase. But God hath no original, he hath no defect, because he was not made of nothing; he hath no increase, because he had no beginning: he was before all things, and therefore depends upon no other thing which by its own change can bring any change upon him. ‡ That which is from itself cannot be changed, because it hath nothing before it, nothing more excellent than itself; but that which is from another, as its first cause and chief good, may be changed by that which was its efficient cause and last end.

2. God is immutable *in knowledge.* God hath known from eternity all that which he can know, so that nothing is hid from him; he knows not at present any more than he hath known from eternity, and that which he knows now, he always knows; *all things are open and naked before him.* A man is said to be changed in regard of know-

* Victorinus, in petavio. † Austin. Fulgen in Petavio.

‡ Petav. Tom. 1. p. 173.

ledge, when he knows that now which he did not know before, or knows that to be false now which he thought true before, or hath something for the object of his understanding now, which he had not before: but this would be *repugnant to the wisdom and omniscience which belongs to the notion of a Deity.* That cannot be God, that is not infinitely wise; that cannot be infinitely wise, that is either ignorant of, or mistaken in his apprehension of, any one thing. If God be changed in knowledge, it must be for want of wisdom; all change of this nature in creatures, implies this defect preceding or accompanying it: such a thought of God, would have been unworthy of him that is *only wise;* that hath none wise besides himself. If he knew that thing this day which he knew not before, he would not be an *only wise* being; for a being that did know every thing at once, might be conceived, and so a wiser being be apprehended by the mind of man. If God understood a thing at one time, which he did not at another, he would be changed from ignorance to knowledge; as if he could not do that this day, which he could do to-morrow, he would be changed from impotence to power. He could not be always omniscient, because there might be yet something still to come, which he yet knows not, though he may know all things that are past. What way so ever you suppose a change, you must suppose a present or a past ignorance; if he be changed in his knowledge for the perfection of his understanding, he was ignorant before; if his understanding be impaired by the change, he is ignorant after it.

If God were changeable in his *knowledge, it would make him unfit to be an object of trust to any rational creature.* His revelations would want the due ground for entertainment, if his understanding were changeable; for that might be revealed as truth now, which might prove false hereafter, and that as false now which hereafter might prove true; and so God would be an unfit object of obedience in his precepts, and an unfit object of confidence in his promises. For if he be changeable in knowledge, he is defective in knowledge, and might promise that now which he would know afterwards was unfit to be promised, and

therefore unfit to be performed: it would make him an incompetent object of dread, in his threatenings; for he might threaten that now, which he might know hereafter were not fit or just to be inflicted. A changeable mind and understanding cannot make a due and right judgment of things to be done, and things to be avoided. No wise man would judge it reasonable to trust a weak and changeable person. God must needs be unchangeable in his knowledge: but as the schoolmen say, that as the sun always shines, so God always knows; as the sun never ceaseth to shine, so God never ceaseth to know. Nothing can be hid from the vast compass of his understanding; no more than any thing can shelter itself without the verge of his power. This farther appears in that,

God knows by his own essence. He doth not know, as we do, by habits, qualities, species, whereby we may be mistaken at one time, and rectified at another: he hath not an understanding distinct from his essence as we have; but being the most simple being, his understanding is his essence; and as from the infinity of his essence we conclude the infinity of his understanding, so from the unchangeableness of his essence we may justly conclude the unchangeableness of his knowledge. Since therefore God is without all composition, and his understanding is not distinct from his essence; what he knows, he knows by his essence; and there can then be no more mutability in his knowledge, than there can be in his essence; and if there were any in that, he could not be God, because he would have the property of a creature. If his understanding then be his essence, his knowledge is as necessary, as unchangeable, as his essence. As his essence eminently contains all perfections in itself, so his understanding comprehends all things past, present, and future in itself. If his understanding and his essence were not one and the same, he were not simple but compounded; if compounded, he would consist of parts; if he consisted of parts, he would not be an independent being, and so would not be God.

God knows all things *by one intuitive act.* As there is no succession in his being, so that he is one thing now, and

another thing hereafter; so there is no succession in his knowledge. He knows things that are successive, before their existence and succession, by one single act of intuition; by one cast of his eye, all things future are present to him, in regard of his eternity and omnipresence: so that though there is a change and variation in the things known, yet his knowledge of them and their several changes in nature, is invariable and unalterable. As imagine a creature that could see with his eye, at one glance, the whole compass of the heavens, without receiving any species from them, he would see the whole heavens uniformly; this part now in the East, then in the West, without any change in his eye; for he sees every part and every motion together; and though that great body varies and whirls about, and is in continual agitation; his eye remains steadfast, suffers no change, beholds all their motions at once, and by one glance. * God knows all things from eternity, and therefore perpetually knows them; the reason is, because the Divine Knowledge is infinite, and therefore comprehends all knowable truths at once. An eternal knowledge comprehends in itself all time, and beholds past and present in the same manner, and therefore his knowledge is immutable. By one simple knowledge he considers the infinite spaces of past and future.

God's knowledge and will is the *cause of all things and their successions.* † There can be no pretence of any changeableness of knowledge in God, but in this case, before things come to pass, he knows that they will come to pass; after they are come to pass, he knows that they are past. This would be something if the succession of things were the cause of the divine knowledge, as it is of our knowledge; but on the contrary, the divine knowledge and will is the cause of the succession of them: God doth not know creatures because they are, but they are because he knows them. *All his works were known to him from the beginning of the world, Acts* 15. 18. But all his works were not known to him, if the events of all those works were not also known to him; if they were

* Suarez, vol. 1, p. 137. † Austin. Bradwardine.

not known to him how should he make them? He could not do any thing ignorantly. He made them then after he knew them, and did not know them after he made them: his knowledge of them made a change in them, their existence made no change in his knowledge. He knew them when they were to be created, in the same manner that he knew them after they were created; before they were brought into action as well as after they were brought into action; before they were made, they were, and were not; they were in the knowledge of God, when they were not in their own nature. God did not receive his knowledge from their existence, but his knowledge and will acted upon them to bring them into being.

Therefore the distinction of past and future *makes no change in the knowledge of God.* When a thing is past, God hath no more distinct knowledge of it after it is past, than he had when it was to come; all things were all in their circumstances of past, present, and to come, seen by his understanding, as they were determined by his will. * Besides to know a day to be past or future, is only to know the state of that day in itself, and to know its relation to that which follows and that which went before. This day wherein we are, if we consider it in the state wherein it was yesterday, it was to come, it was future; but if we consider it in that state wherein it will be to-morrow, we understand it as past. This in man cannot be said to be a different knowledge of the thing itself, but only of the circumstance attending a thing, and the different relation of it. As I see the sun this day, I know it shone yesterday, I know it will to-morrow; my knowledge of the sun is the same; if there be any change it is in the sun not in my knowledge, only I apply my knowledge to such particular circumstances. How much more must the knowledge of those things in God be unchangeable, who knows all those states, conditions, and circumstances most perfectly from eternity, wherein there is no succession, no past or

* Gamch 1. pa. Aquin. Qu. 9. cap. 1. p. 73.

future, and therefore will know them for ever? He always beholds the same thing; he sees indeed succession in things, and he sees a thing to be past which before was future: as from eternity he saw Adam as existing in such a time; in the first time he saw that he would be, in the following time he saw that he had been: but this he knew from eternity, this he knew in the same manner; though there was a variation in Adam, yet there was no variation in God's knowledge of him in all his states; though Adam was not present to himself, yet in all his states he was present to God's eternity.

Consider, that the knowledge of God, in regard of the *manner of it, as well as the objects, is incomprehensible to a finite creature.* So that though we cannot arrive to a full understanding of the manner of God's knowledge, yet we must so conceive of it, as to remove all imperfection from him in it: and since it is an imperfection to be changeable, we must remove that from God; the knowledge of God about things past, present, and future, must be inconceivably above ours: *His understanding is infinite, Psa.* 147. 5. There is no number of it; it can no more be calculated or drawn into an account by us, than infinite spaces which have no bounds and limits can be measured by us. We can no more arrive, even in heaven, to a comprehensive understanding of the manner of his knowledge, than of the infinite glory of his essence; we may as well comprehend one as the other. This we must conclude, that God being not a body, doth not see one thing with eyes and another thing with mind, as we do; but being a spirit, he sees and knows only with mind, and his mind is himself, and is as unchangeable as himself; and therefore as he is not now another thing than what he was, so he knows not any thing now in another manner than as he knew it from eternity. He sees all things in the glass of his own essence; as therefore the glass doth not vary, so neither doth his vision.

3. God is unchangeable in his *will and purpose.* A change in purpose is, when a man determines to do that now which before he determined not to do, or to do the contrary; when a man hates that thing which he loved,

or begins to love that which he before hated. When the will is changed, a man begins to will that which he willed not before, and ceaseth to will that which he willed before. But whatsoever God hath decreed, is immutable; whatsoever God hath promised shall be accomplished; *The word that goes forth of his mouth shall not return to him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleaseth;* whatsoever *he purposeth, he will do;* his decrees are therefore called *mountains of brass, Numb.* 23. 19. *Zach.* 6. 1. Brass, as having substance and solidity; mountains, as being immoveable, not only by any creature but by himself, because they stand upon the basis of infallible wisdom, and are supported by uncontroulable power.

From this immutability of his will published to man, there could be no release from the severity of the law, without satisfaction made by the death of a Mediator, since it was the unalterable will of God that death should be the wages of sin; and from this immutable will it was, that the length of time from the first promise of the Redeemer to his mission, and the daily provocations of men, altered not his purpose for the accomplishment of it in the fulness of that time he had resolved upon; nor did the wickedness of former ages hinder the addition of several promises as buttresses to the first. To make this out, consider, that

The will of God is the *same with his essence.* If God had a will distinct from his essence, he would not be the most simple being. God hath not a faculty of will distinct from himself. As his understanding is nothing else but *Deus intelligens,* God *understanding;* so his will is nothing else but *Deus volens,* God *willing;* being therefore the essence of God, though it is considered according to our weakness as a faculty, it is as his understanding and wisdom, eternal and immutable, and can no more be changed than his essence. The immutability of the divine counsel depends upon that of his essence: he is the Lord Jehovah, therefore he is true to his word, *Mal.* 3. 6. *Isa.* 43. 13, *Yea, before the day was, I am he, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.* He is

immutable in his essence, therefore irresistible in his power.

There is a concurrence of God's will and understanding in *every thing*. As his knowledge is eternal, so is his purpose. Things created had not been known to be, had not God resolved them to be the act of his will; the existence of any thing supposeth an act of his will. Again, as God knows all things by one simple vision of his understanding, so he wills all things by one act of volition; therefore the purpose of God in the scripture is not expressed by counsels, in the plural number, but counsel, shewing that all the purposes of God are not various, but as one will, branching itself out into many acts towards the creature; but all knit in one root, all links of one chain. Whatsoever is eternal, is immutable: as his knowledge is eternal, and therefore immutable, so is his will; he wills nothing to be in time, but what he willed from eternity; if he willed in time that to be, that he willed not from eternity, then he would know that in time which he knew not from eternity: for God knows nothing future, but as his will orders it to be future in time to be brought into being.

There can be no reason for *any change in the will of God.* When men change in their minds, it must be for want of foresight, because they could not foresee all the obstacles which might suddenly offer themselves; which if they had foreseen, they would not have taken such measures; hence men often will that which they afterwards wish they had not willed, when they come to understand it clearer, and see that to be injurious to them which they thought to be good for them; or else the change proceeds from a natural instability without any just cause, and an easiness to be drawn into that which is unrighteous; or else it proceeds from a want of power, when men take new counsels, because they are invincibly hindered from executing the old. But none of those can be in God.

It cannot be for want of *foresight.* What can be wanting to an infinite understanding? How can any unknown event defeat his purpose; since nothing hap-

pens in the world but what he wills to effect, or wills to permit; and therefore all future events are present with him? Besides, it doth not consist with God's wisdom to resolve any thing, but upon the highest reason; and what is the highest reason, cannot but be unalterable in itself; for there can be no reason and wisdom higher than the highest. All God's purposes are not bare acts of will, but acts of counsel, *Eph.* 1. 11, *He works all things according to the counsel of his own will;* and he doth not say so much that his will, as that *his counsel shall stand*, *Isa.* 46. 10. It stands because it is counsel, and the immutability of a promise is called the *immutability of his counsel*, *Heb.* 6. 17, as being introduced and settled by the most perfect wisdom, and therefore to be carried on to a full and complete execution. His purpose then cannot be changed for want of foresight; for this would be a charge of weakness.

Nor can it proceed from a *natural instability of his will*, or an easiness to be drawn to that which is unrighteous. If his will should not adhere to his counsel, it is because it is not fit to be followed, or because it will not follow it; if not fit to be followed, it is a reflection upon his wisdom; if it be established, and he will not follow it, there is a contrariety in God, as there is in a fallen creature, will against wisdom. That cannot be in God, which he hates in a creature, viz. the disorder of faculties, and being out of their due place. The *righteousness of God is like a great mountain*, *Psal.* 36. 6. The rectitude of his nature is as immoveable in itself, as all the great mountains in the world are by the strength of man. *He is not as a man, that he should repent or lie*, *Numb.* 23. 19, who often changes, out of a perversity of will, as well as want of wisdom to foresee, or want of ability to perform. His eternal purpose must either be righteous or unrighteous; if righteous and holy he would become unholy by the change; if not righteous nor holy, then he was unrighteous before the change; which way soever it falls, it would reflect upon the righteousness of God, which is a blasphemous imagination. * If God did change his pur-

* Maxim. Tyrius, dissert. 3. 30.

pose, it must be either for the better, then the counsel of God was bad before; or for the worse, then he was not wise and good before.

Nor can it be for want of *strength*. Who hath power to controul him? Not all the combined devices and endeavours of men can shake the counsel of God. *Prov.* 19. 21, *There are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand;* that, and that only, shall stand: man hath a power to devise and imagine, but no power to effect and execute of himself. God wants no more power to effect what he will, than he wants understanding to know what is fit. Well then, since God wanted not wisdom to frame his decrees, nor holiness to regulate them, nor power to effect them; what should make him change them? Since there can be no reason superior to his; no event unforeseen by him; no holiness comparable to his; no unrighteousness found in him; no power equal to his to put difficulties in his way.

Though the will of God be immutable, yet it is not to be understood so, as that *the things themselves so willed, are immutable;* nor will the immutability of the things willed by him, follow upon the unchangeableness of his will in willing them; though God be firm in willing them, yet he doth not will that they should always be. God did not perpetually will the doing those things which he once decreed to be done: he decreed that Christ should suffer, but he did not decree that Christ should always suffer; so he willed the Mosaical rites for a time, but he did not will that they should always continue; he willed that they should endure only for a time, and when the time came for their ceasing, God had been mutable if he had not put an end to them, because his will had fixed such a period: so that the changing of those things which he had once appointed to be practised, is so far from charging God with changeableness, that God would be mutable if he did not take them away, since he decreed as well their abolition at such a time, as their continuance till such a time; so that the removal of them was pursuant to his unchangeable will and decree. If God had decreed

that such laws should always continue, and afterwards changed that decree, and resolved the abrogation of them; then indeed God had been mutable; he had rescinded one decree by another; he had then seen an error in his first resolve, and there must be some weakness in the reason and wisdom whereon it was grounded: * but it was not so here; for the change of those laws is so far from slurring God with any mutability, that the very change of them is no other than the issue of his eternal decree; for from eternity he purposed in himself to change this or that dispensation, though he decreed to bring such a dispensation into the world: the decree itself was eternal and immutable, but the thing decreed was temporary and mutable. As a decree from eternity doth not make the thing decreed to be eternal; so neither doth the immutability of the decree, render the thing so decreed to be immutable: as for example, God decreed from eternity to create the world; the eternity of this decree did not make the world to be in being and actually created from eternity; so God decreed immutably that the world so created should continue for such a time; the decree is immutable if the world perish at that time, and would not be immutable if the world did endure beyond that time; as when a prince orders a man's remaining in prison for so many days; if he be prevailed with to give him a delivery before those days, or to continue him in custody for the same crime after those days, his order is changed; but if he orders his delivery just at that time, till which he had before decreed that he should continue in prison, the purpose and order of the prince remains firm, and the change in the state of the prisoner is the fruit of that firm and fixed resolution: so that we must distinguish between the person decreeing, the decree itself, and the thing decreed. The person decreeing, viz. God, is in himself immutable, and the decree is immutable; but the thing decreed may be mutable; and if it were not changed according to the first purpose, it would argue the decree itself to be changed; for while a man

* Turretin de satisfac. p. 266.

wills that this may be done now, and another thing done afterwards; the same will remains, and though there be a change in the effect, there is no change in the will.

The immutability of God's will doth not *infringe the liberty of it*. The liberty of God's will consists with the necessity of continuing his purpose. God is necessarily good, immutably good; yet he is freely so, and would not be otherwise than what he is. God was free in his first purpose; and purposing this or that by an infallible and unerring wisdom, it would be a weakness to change the purpose: but indeed the liberty of God's will doth not seem so much to consist in an indifference to this or that as in an independence on any thing without himself: his will was free, because it did not depend upon the objects about which his will was conversant. To be immutably good, is no point of imperfection, but the height of perfection.

4. As God is unchangeable in regard of essence, knowledge, purpose; so *he is unchangeable in regard of place*, he cannot be changed in time, because he is eternity; so he cannot be changed in place, because he hath ubiquity: he is eternal, therefore cannot be changed in time; he is omnipresent, therefore cannot be changed in place: he doth not begin to be in one place wherein he was not before, or cease to be in a place wherein he was before. He that fills every place in heaven and earth, cannot change place; he cannot leave one to possess another, that is equally in regard of his essence in all; *He fills heaven and earth*, *Jer.* 23. 24. The heavens that are not subject to those changes to which sublunary bodies are subject, that are not diminished in quantity or quality; yet they are always changing place in regard of their motion; no part of them always continues in the same point: but God hath no change of his nature, because he is most inward in every thing; he is substantially in all spaces, real and imaginary; there is no part of the world which he doth not fill; no place can be imagined wherein he doth not exist. Suppose a million of worlds above and about this, encircling one another; his essence would be in every part and point of those worlds; be-

cause it is indivisible, it cannot be divided; nor can it be contained within those created limits of millions of worlds, when the most soaring imagination hath run through all creatures, to the highest sphere of the heavens, and imagined one world after another, till it can fancy no more: none of these, nor all of these, can contain God; for the *Heaven of heavens cannot contain him*, 1 *Kings* 8. 27. He is *higher than heaven, deeper than hell*, and possesses infinite imaginary spaces beyond created limits. He who hath no cause of being can have no limits of being: * And though by creation he began to be in the world; yet he did not begin to be where the world is, but was in the same imaginary space from all eternity; for he was alway in himself by his own eternal *Ubi*.

Therefore observe, that when God is said to draw near to us, when we *draw near* to him, it is not by local motion or change of place, but by special and spiritual influences, by exciting and supporting grace. As we ordinarily say, the sun is come into the house when yet it remains in its place and order in the heavens, because the beams pierce through the window and enlighten the room: so when God is said to *come down*, or descend, it is not by a change of place, but a change of outward acts, when he puts forth himself in ways of fresh mercy or new judgments, in the effluxes of his love or the flames of his wrath. When good men feel the warm beams of his grace refreshing them, or wicked men feel the fire of his anger scorching them. God's drawing near to us, is not so much his coming to us, but his drawing us to him: † as when water-men pull a rope that is in one end fastened to the shore, and the other end to the vessel; the shore is immoveable, yet it seems to the eye to come to them, but they really move to the shore. God is an immoveable rock; we are floating and uncertain creatures; while he seems to approach to us, he doth really make us to approach to him: he comes not to us by any change of place himself, but draws us to him by a change of mind, will, and affections in us.

* Gamacheus, ut supra.
† The ancients, as Dionysius, expressed it by this similitude.

PART II.

EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE IMMUTABILITY.

The name JEHOVAH *implies immutability—The essential connexion of his immutability with the glory of all his perfections—All creatures mutable—God only always the same—There was no change in time in the work of creation—No change in the divinity of his Son when he became incarnate—Affections ascribed to God argue no change in him—Not fulfilling some predictions of scripture—When said to be angry and appeased—When he abrogates some laws and enacts others—In all changes God remains immutable.*

II. THE *reasons which prove God to be immutable.* The heathens acknowledged God to be so; * Plato and the Pythagoreans called God, or the stable good principle ουσίαν *Idem*: the evil principle, αεὶ another thing, changeable; one thing one time, and another thing another time.

1. The name Jehovah signifies this attribute, *Exod.* 3. 14, *I am that I am, I am hath sent me to you.* † It signifies his immutability as well as eternity. *I am* signifies his eternity; *that* or *the same that I am,* his immutability. As it respects the essence of God, it signifies his unchangeable being from eternity to eternity. ‡ As it respects the creature, it signifies his constancy in his counsels and promises, which spring from no other cause but

* Plato calls God ἐχόμενον ἀυτὸν, ετενρον lib. 1. de Be. Stabilisq, manens, dat cunctamoveri, Boet. Consolat. lib. 3.

† Trap. on Exod. ‡ Amyrald. de Trinitat. p. 433.

the unchangeableness of his nature. The reason why men stand not to their covenant, is because they are not always the same. *I am*, that is, I am the same, before the creation of the world, and since the creation of the world; before the entrance of sin, and since the entrance of sin; before their going into Egypt, and while they remain in Egypt. * The very name Jehovah, bears according to the grammatical order, a mark of God's unchangeableness; it never hath any thing added to it, nor any thing taken from it; it hath no plural number, no affixes, a custom peculiar to the eastern language; it never changes its letters as other words do.

† That only is a true being, which hath not only an eternal existence, but stability in it: that is not truly a being that never remains in the same state. All things that are changed, cease to be what they were, and begin to be what they were not, and therefore cannot have the title truly applied to them *they are;* they are indeed, but like a river in a continual flux, that no man ever sees the same; let his eye be fixed upon one place of it, the water he sees slides away, and that which he saw not succeeds in its place; let him take his eye off but for the least moment, and fix it there again, and he sees not the same that he saw before. All sensible things are in a perpetual stream; that which is sometimes this and sometimes that, is not, because it is not always the same; whatsoever is changed, is something now which it was not alway: but of God it is said *I am*, which could not be if he were changeable; for it may be said of him he is not, as well as he is, because he is not what he was; if we say not of him, he was, nor he will be, but only he is; whence should any change arrive? He must invincibly remain the same, of whose nature, perfections, knowledge and will, it cannot be said it was, as if it were not now in him; or it shall be, as it were not yet in him; but he is, because he doth not only exist; but doth alway exist the same. *I am*, that is, I receive from no other what I am in myself: he depends upon no other in his essence,

* Spanhe Synta. part. 1. p. 39.
† Petav. Theol. Dogmat. tom. 1. cap. 6. § 6, 7, 8.

knowledge, purposes, and therefore hath no changing power over him.

2. If God were changeable, *he could not be the most perfect Being*. God is the most perfect Being, and possesses in himself infinite and essential goodness, *Mat.* 5, 48. If he could change from that perfection, he were not the highest exemplar and copy for us to write after. If God doth change, it must be either to a greater perfection than he had before, or to a less, *mutatio perfectiva vel amissiva;* if he changes to acquire a perfection he had not, then he was not before the most excellent being necessarily; he was not what he might be; there was a defect in him, and a privation of that which is better than what he had and was; and then he was not always the best, and so was not always God; and being not always God, could never be God; for to begin to be God, is against the notion of God: Not to a less perfection than he had; that were to change to imperfection, and to lose a perfection which he possessed before, and cease to be the best being; for he would lose some good which he had, and acquire some evil which he was free from before: so that the sovereign perfection of God, is an invincible bar to any change in him; for which way soever you cast it for a change, his supreme excellency is impaired by it: for in all change, there is something from which a thing is changed, and something to which it is changed; so that on the one part there is a loss of what it had, and on the other part, there is an acquisition of what it had not: if to the better, he was not perfect, and so was not God; if to the worse, he will not be perfect, and so be no longer God after that change. If God be changed, his change must be voluntary or necessary; if voluntary he then intends the change for the better, and chose it to acquire a perfection by it; the will must be carried out to any thing under the notion of some goodness in that which it desires. Since good is the object of the desire and will of the creature, evil cannot be the object of the desire and will of the Creator. And if he should be changed for the worse, when he did really intend the better, it would speak a defect of wisdom, and a mistake of that for good, which was evil and imperfect in itself; and if it be for the better, it must

be a motion or change for something without himself; that which he desireth is not possessed by himself but by some other.

There is then some good without him, and above him, which is the end in this change; for nothing acts but for some end, and that end is within itself or without itself; if the end for which God changes, be without himself there is something better than himself.

Besides, if he were voluntarily changed for the better, why did he not change before? If it were for want of power, he had the imperfection of weakness; if for want of knowledge of what was the best good, he had the imperfection of wisdom, he was ignorant of his own happiness; if he had both wisdom to know it and power to effect it, it must be for want of will; he then wanted that love to himself and his own glory, which is necessary in the Supreme Being. Voluntarily he could not be changed for the worse, he could not be such an enemy to his own glory, there is nothing but would hinder its own imperfection and becoming worse; necessarily he could not be changed, for that necessity must arise from himself, and then the difficulties spoken of before will recur; or it must arise from another; he cannot be bettered by another, because nothing hath any good but what it hath received from the hands of his bounty, and that without loss to himself; nor made worse, if any thing made him worse, it would be sin, but that cannot touch his essence or obscure his glory, but in the design and nature of the sin itself, Job. 35. 6, 7, *If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? Or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him; or what receives he at thy hand?* He hath no addition of glory by the service of man, no more than the sun hath of light by a multitude of torches kindled on the earth; nor is he any more impaired by the sins of men, than the light of the sun by men's shooting arrows against it.

3. * *God were not the most simple Being*, if he were not

* Gamach. in prim. part, Aquin. quest. 9. cap. 1. part. 72.

immutable. There is in every thing that is mutable, a composition, either essential or accidental; and in all changes, something of the thing changed remains, and something of it ceaseth and is done away, as for example, in an accidental change, if a white wall be made black, it loses its white colour; but the wall itself, which was the subject of that colour, remains and loses nothing of its substance: likewise in a substantial change, as when wood is burnt, the substantial part of wood is lost, the earthly part is changed into ashes, the airy part ascends in smoke, the watery part is changed into air by the fire: there is not an annihilation of it, but a resolution of it into those parts whereof it was compounded; and this change doth evidence, that it was compounded of several parts distinct from one another. If there were any change in God, it is by separating something from him or adding something to him; if by separating something from him, then he was compounded of something distinct from himself; for if it were not distinct from himself, it could not be separated from him without loss of his Being; if by adding any thing to him, then it is a compounding of him, either substantially or accidentally.

Mutability is absolutely inconsistent with simplicity, whether the change come from an internal or external principle. If a change be wrought by something without, it supposeth either contrary or various parts in the thing so changed, whereof it consists; if it be wrought by any thing within, it supposes that the thing so changed consists of one part that changes it, and another part that is changed, and so it would not be a simple being. If God could be changed by any thing within himself, all in God would not be God; his essence would depend upon some parts, whereof some would be superior to others: if one part were able to change or destroy another, that which changes would be God, that which is changed would not be God; so God would be made up of a Deity and a non-deity, and part of God would depend upon God; part would be dependent, and part would be independent; part would be mutable, part immutable: so that mutablity is against the notion of God's independence as

well as his simplicity. * God is the most simple being; for that which is first in nature, having nothing beyond it, cannot by any means be thought to be compounded; for whatsoever is so, depends upon the parts whereof it is compounded, and so is not the first being: now God being infinitely simple, hath nothing in himself which is not himself, and therefore cannot will any change in himself, he being his own essence and existence.

4. *God were not eternal* if he were mutable. In all change there is something that perishes, either substantially or accidentally. All change is a kind of death or imitation of death; that which was, dies, and begins to be what it was not. The soul of man, though it ceaseth not to be and exist; yet when it ceaseth to be in quality what it was, is said to die. Adam died when he changed from integrity to corruption, though both his soul and body were in being; and the soul of a regenerate man is said to *die to sin*, when it is changed from sin to grace, *Rom.* 6. 11. In all change there is a resemblance of death: so the notion of mutability is against the eternity of God. If any thing be acquired by a change, then that which is acquired was not from eternity, and so he was not wholly eternal; if any thing be lost which was from eternity, he is not wholly everlasting: if he *decreased* by the change, something in him which had no beginning would have an end; if he increased by that change, something in him would have a beginning that might have no end. †

What is changed does not remain, and what doth not remain is not eternal. Though God alway remains in regard of existence, he would be immortal and live alway; yet if he should suffer any change, he could not properly be eternal; because he would not alway be the same, and would not in every part be eternal; for all change is finished in time, one moment preceding, another moment following; but that which is before time cannot be changed by time. God cannot be eternally what he was, that is, he cannot have a true eternity, if he had a new

* Ficinus Zachar. mitylen in Peta. Tom. 1. p. 169.

† Austin in Pet. Tom. 1. p. 291.

knowledge, new purpose, a new essence; if he were sometimes this and sometimes that, sometimes know this and sometimes know that, sometimes purpose this, and afterwards have a new purpose; he would be partly temporary and partly eternal, not truly and universally eternal: he that hath any thing new, hath not properly and truly an entire eternity. Again, by the same reason that God could in the least cease to be what he was, he might also cease wholly to be; and no reason can be rendered why God might not cease wholly to be, as well as cease to be intirely and uniformly what he was. All changeableness implies a corruptibility.

5. If God were changeable, he were not *infinite and almighty.* All change ends in addition or diminution; if any thing be added, he was not infinite before; if any thing be diminished, he is not infinite after. All change implies bounds and limits to that which is changed; but God is infinite, *his greatness is unsearchable:** We can add number to number without end, and can conceive an infinite number; yet the greatness of God is beyond all our conceptions: but if there could be any change in his greatness for the better, it would not be unsearchable before that change; if for the worse, it would not be unsearchable after that change: whatsoever hath limits and is changeable, is conceivable and searchable; but God is not only not known, but impossible in his own nature to be known and searched out, and therefore impossible to have any diminution in his nature. All that which is changed arrives to something which it was not before, or ceaseth in part to be what it was before. He would not also be *Almighty.* What is omnipotent cannot be made worse; for to be made worse, is in part to be corrupted: if he be made better, he was not Almighty before, something of power was wanting to him if there should be any change, it must proceed from himself or from another; if from himself, it would be an inability to preserve himself in the perfection of his nature; if from another, he would be inferior in strength, knowledge, and power to that

* Psal. 145. 3. אין חקר to end no term.

which changes him, either in his nature, knowledge, or will; in both an inability; an inability in him to continue the same, or an inability in him to resist the power of another.

6. *The world could not be ordered and governed*, but by some principle or being which were immutable. Principles are always more fixed and stable, than things which proceed from those principles; and this is true both in morals and naturals. Principles in conscience, whereby men are governed, remain firmly engraven in their minds. The root lies firmly in the earth, while the branches are shaken with the wind. The heavens, the cause of generation, are more firm and stable than those things which are wrought by their influence. All things in the world are moved by some power and virtue which is stable; and unless it were so, no order would be observed in motion, no motion could be regularly continued. He could not be a full satisfaction to the infinite desire of the souls of his people. Nothing can truly satisfy the soul of man but rest; and nothing can give it rest, but that which is perfect, and immutably perfect; for else it would be subject to those agitations and variation, which the being it depends upon is subject to.

The principle of all things must be immutable*; which is described by some by a unit, the principle of number, wherein there is a resemblance of God's unchangeableness. A unit is not variable, it continues in its own nature immutably an unit; it never varies from itself, it cannot be changed from itself, but is as it were so omnipotent towards others, that it changes all numbers: if you add any number, it is the beginning of that number, but the unit is not increased by it; a new number ariseth from that addition, but the unit still remains the same, and adds a value to other figures, but receives none from them.

Thirdly.—Immutability is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature. Mutability is natural to every creature as a creature, and immutability is the sole perfection of God. He only is infinite wisdom, able to

* Fotherby Atheomastix. p. 308. Gerard loc. com.

foreknow future events; he only is infinitely powerful, able to call forth all means to effect his purposes; so that wanting neither wisdom to contrive, nor strength to execute, he cannot alter his counsel. None being above him, nothing in him contrary to him, and being defective in no blessedness and perfection, he cannot vary in his essence and nature. Had not immutability as well as eternity been a property solely pertaining to the divine nature, as well as creative power and eternal duration; the apostle's argument to prove Christ to be God from this perpetual sameness, had come short of any convincing strength. These words of the text he applies to Christ, *Heb.* 1, 10, 11, 12, *They shall be changed, but thou art the same.* There had been no strength in the reason, if immutability by nature did belong to any creature.

The changeableness of all creatures is evident;

1. Of *corporeal* creatures, it is evident to sense. All plants and animals, as they have their duration bounded in certain limits; so while they do exist, they proceed from their rise to their fall; they pass through many sensible alterations, from one degree of growth to another, from buds to blossoms, from blossoms to flowers and fruits; they come to the pitch that nature hath set them, and return back to the state from whence they sprung; there is not a day, but they make some acquisition, or suffer some loss; they die and spring up every day; nothing in them more certain than their inconstancy, *Rom.* 8. 20. *The creature is subject to vanity.* The heavenly bodies are changing their place; the sun every day is running his race, and stays not in the same point; and though they are not changed in their essence, yet they are in their place. Some indeed say there is a continual generation of light in the sun, as there is a loss of light by the casting out its beams, as in a fountain there is a flowing out of the streams, and a continual generation of supply; and though these heavenly bodies have kept their standing and motion from the time of their creation; yet both the sun's standing still in Joshua's time, and its going back in Hezekiah's time, shew that they are changeable at the pleasure of God.

But in man the change is perpetually visible; every day there is a change from ignorance to knowledge, from one will to another, from passion to passion, sometimes sad and sometimes cheerful, sometimes craving this and presently nauseating it; his body changes from health to sickness, or from weakness to strength. Man, who is the noblest creature, the subordinate end of the creation of other things, cannot assure himself of a consistency and fixedness in any thing for the short space of a day, no not of a minute; all his months are *months of vanity;* whence the Psalmist, *Psa.* 39. 5, calls man at the *best estate, altogether vanity,* a mere heap of vanity: as he contains in his nature the nature of all creatures, so he inherits in his nature the vanity of all creatures: a little world, the centre of the world, and of the vanity of the world; yea, *lighter than vanity;* more moveable than a feather; tost between passion and passion, daily changing his end, and changing the means; an image of nothing.

2. *Spiritual* natures, as angels; they change not in their being, but that is from the indulgence of God: they change not in their goodness, but that is not from their nature, but divine grace in their confirmation; but they change in their knowledge, they know more by Christ than they did by creation; they have an addition of knowledge every day, by the providential dispensations of God to his church; and the increase of their astonishment and love, is according to the increase of their knowledge and insight: they cannot have new discoveries without new admirations of what is discovered to them; there is a change in their joy, when there is a change in a sinner, *Luke* 15. 10. They were changed in their essence, when they were made such glorious spirits of nothing; some of them were changed in their will, when of holy they became impure: the good angels were changed in their understandings, when the glories of God in Christ were presented to their view; and all can be changed in their essence again; and as they were made of nothing, so by the power of God may be reduced to nothing again. So glorified souls shall have an unchanged operation about

God, for they shall behold his face without any grief or fear of loss, without vagrant thoughts; but they can never be unchangeable in their nature, because they can never pass from finite to infinite. No creature can be unchangeable in its nature.

Because every creature *rose from nothing*. As they rose from nothing, so they tend to nothing unless they are preserved by God; the notion of a creature speaks unchangeableness; because to be a creature, is to be made something of nothing, and therefore creation is a change of nothing into something: the being of a creature begins from change, and therefore the essence of a creature is subject to change: God only is uncreated, and therefore unchangeable; if he were made he could not be immutable; for the very making is a change of not being into being. All creatures were made good as they were the fruits of God's goodness and power; but must needs be mutable, because they were the extracts of nothing.

No creature can be unchangeable because every creature *depends purely upon the will of God*. They depend not upon themselves, but upon another for their being: as they received their being from the word of his mouth and the arm of his power, so by the same word they can be cancelled into nothing, and return into as little significancy as when they were nothing: he that created them by a word, can by a word destroy them, *Psa.* 104. 29. If God should *take away their breath, they die and return into their dust*. As it was in the power of the Creator that things might be, before they actually were; so it is in the power of the Creator that things after they are, may cease to be what they are; and they are in their own nature as reducible to nothing, as they were producible by the power of God from nothing; for there needs no more than an act of God's will to annihilate them, as there needed only an act of God's will to make them. Creatures are all subject to a higher cause: they are all *reputed as nothing: he doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest*

thou? Dan. 4. 35. But God is unchangeable, because he is the highest good; none above him, all below him; all dependent on him; himself upon none.

No creature is absolutely perfect. No creature can be so perfect or can ever be, but something by the infinite power of God may be added to it; for whatsoever is finite may receive greater additions, and therefore a change. No creature you can imagine, but in your thoughts you may fancy him capable of greater perfections than you know he hath, or than really he hath: the perfections of all creatures are searchable; the perfection of God is only *unsearchable,* and therefore he only immutable. *God only is always the same:* time makes no addition to him, nor diminisheth any thing of him; his nature and essence, his wisdom and will have always been the same from eternity, and shall be the same to eternity without any variation.

Fourthly. Some *propositions to clear this unchangeableness of God, from any thing that seems contrary to it.*

First. There was no change in God when he began to create the world in time. The creation was a real change, but the change was not subjectively in God, but in the creature; the creature began to be what it was not before. Creation is considered as active or passive; * active creation is the will and power of God to create; this is from eternity, because God willed from eternity to create in time; this never had beginning, for God never began in time to understand any thing, to will any thing, or to be able to do any thing; but he always understood, and always willed those things which he determined from eternity to produce in time. The decree of God may be taken for the act decreeing, that is eternal and the same; or for the object decreed, that is in time. So that there may be a change in the object, but not in the will whereby the object exists.

1. There was no change in God by the act of creation, *because there was no new will in him.* There was no new act of his will which was not before. The creation be-

* Gammach. in part. 1. Aquin. Qu. 9. cap. 1. p. 72.

gun in time, but the will of creating was from eternity. The work was new, but the decree whence that new work sprung, was as ancient as the Ancient of days. When the time of creating came, God was not made *ex nolente volens*, as we are; for whatsoever God willed to be now done, he willed from eternity to be done; but he willed also that it should not be done till such an instant of time, and that it should not exist before such a time. If God had willed the creation of the world only at that time when the world was produced and not before, then indeed God had been changeable. But though God spake that word, which he had not spoken before, whereby the world was brought into being, yet he did not will that which he willed not before. God did not create by a new counsel or new will, but by that which was from eternity, *Eph.* 1. 9.

All things are wrought according to that purpose *in himself*, and according to *the counsel of his will*, ver. 11. And as the holiness of the elect is the fruit of his eternal will *before the foundation of the world*, ver. 4, so likewise is the existence of things, and of those persons whom he did elect; as when an artificer frames a house or a temple according to that model he had in his mind some years before, there is no change in the model in his mind, the artificer is the same, though the work is produced by him sometime after he had framed that copy of it in his own mind; but there is a change of the thing produced by him according to that model. Or when a rich man intends four or five years hence if he lives, to build an hospital, is there any change in his will, when after the expiration of that time he builds and endows it? Though it be after his will, yet it is the fruit of his precedent will. So God from all eternity did will and command that the creatures should exist in such a part of time; and by this eternal will, all things, whether past, present or to come, did, do, and shall exist at that point of time, which that will did appoint for them; not as though God had a new will when things stood up in being, but only that which was prepared in his immutable counsel and will from eternity, doth then appear. There

can be no instant fixed from eternity, wherein it can be said God did not will the creation of the world; for had the will of God for the shortest moment been undetermined to the creation of the world, and afterwards resolved upon it, there had been a moral change in God from not willing to willing; but this there was not, for God executes nothing in time which he had not ordained from eternity, and appointed all the means and circumstances whereby it should be brought about. As the determination of our Saviour to suffer was not a new will, but an eternal counsel, and wrought no change in God, *Acts* 2. 23.

2. There is no change in God by the act of creation, because *there was no new power in God.* Had God a will at the time of the creation, which he had not before, there had been a moral change in him; so had there been in him a power only to create then, and not before, there had been a physical change in him from weakness to ability. There can be no more new power in God, than there can be a new will in God; for his will is his power, and what he willeth to effect, that he doth effect. As he was unchangeably holy: so he was unchangeably almighty, *which was, and is, and is to come*; which was Almighty, and is Almighty, and ever will be Almighty. The work therefore makes no change in God, but there is a change in the thing wrought by that power of God. Suppose you had a seal engraven upon some metal a hundred years old, or as old as the creation; and you should this day, so many ages after the engraving of it, make an impression of that seal upon wax; would you say the engravement upon the seal were changed, because it produced that stamp upon the wax now, which it did not before? No, the change is purely in the wax, which receives a new figure or form by the impression; not in the seal, that was capable of imprinting the same long before. God was the same from eternity as he was when he made a signature of himself upon the creatures by creation, and is no more changed by stamping them into several forms, than the seal is changed by making impression upon the wax: as when a house is enlightened by the sun, or that which

was cold is heated by it; there is a change in the house from darkness to light, from coldness to heat; but is there any change in the light and heat of the sun? There is a change in the thing enlightened or warmed by that light and heat which remains fixed and constant in the sun, which was as capable in itself to produce the same effects before, as that instant when it works them: so when God is the author of a new work, he is not changed; because he works it by an eternal will, and an eternal power.

Nor is there any new relation acquired by God by the creation of the world. There was a new relation acquired by the creature; as when a man sins, he hath another relation to God than he had before; he hath relation to God, as a criminal to a judge; but there is no change in God, but in the malefactor. The being of men makes no more change in God than the sins of men. As a tree is now on our right hand, and by our turning about, it is on our left hand, sometimes before us, sometimes behind us, according to our motion near it or about it; there is no change in the tree, which remains firm and fixed in the earth; but the change is wholly in the posture of the body: whereby the tree may be said to be before us or behind us, or on the right hand or on the left hand. * God gained no new relation of Lord or Creator by the creation; for though he had created nothing to rule over, yet he had the power to create and rule; as a man may be called a skilful writer, though he does not write, because he is able to do it when he pleases; or a man skilful in physic is called a physician, though he doth not practice that skill, or discover his art in the distribution of medicines; because he may do it when he pleases, it depends upon his own will to shew his art when he has a mind to it: so the name *Creator* and *Lord*, belongs to God from eternity, because he could create and rule, though he did not create and rule: but howsoever, if there were any such change of relation, that God may be called Creator and Lord, after the creation and not before; it is not a change in essence, nor in knowledge, nor in will; God

* Petav. Theol. Dogmat. Tom. 1 lib.

gains no perfection, nor suffers any diminution by it, his knowledge is not increased by it; he is no more by it than he was, and will be, if all those things ceased; and therefore Austin illustrates it by this similitude; as a piece of money when it is given as the price of a thing, or deposited only as a pledge for the security of a thing borrowed, the coin is the same and is not changed, though the relation it had as a pledge and as a price be different from one another; so that suppose any new relation be added, yet there is nothing happens to the nature of God which may infer any change.

The *second* proposition, There was no change in the divine nature of the Son, *when he assumed human nature.* There was a union of the two natures, but no change of the Deity into the humanity, or of the humanity into the Deity; both preserved their peculiar properties. The humanity was changed by a communication of excellent gifts from the divine nature; not by being brought into an equality with it, for it was impossible that a creature should become equal to the Creator; he took the *form of a servant*, but he lost not the form of God, he despoiled not himself of the perfections of the Deity. He was indeed emptied, *and became of no reputation*, but he did not cease to be God, though he was reputed to be only a man, and a very mean one too. The glory of his divinity was not extinguished nor diminished, though it was obscured and darkened under the vail of our infirmities; but there was no more change in the hiding of it, than there is in the body of the sun when it is shadowed by the interposition of a cloud; his blood while it was pouring out from his veins was the blood of God, *Acts* 20. 28; and therefore, when he was bowing the head of his humanity upon the cross, he had the nature and perfections of God; for had he ceased to be God, he had been a mere creature, and his sufferings would have been of as little value and satisfaction as the sufferings of a creature.

He could not have been a sufficient Mediator, had he ceased to be God; and he had ceased to be God, had he lost any one perfection proper to the divine nature; and

losing none, he lost not this of unchangeableness, which is none of the meanest belonging to the deity. Why by his union with the human nature should he lose this, any more than he lost his omniscience, which he discovered by his knowledge of the thoughts of men; or his mercy, which he manifested to the height in the time of his suffering? That is truly a change, when a thing ceaseth to be what it was before; but this was not in Christ; he assumed our nature without laying aside his own. * When the soul is united to the body, doth it lose any of those perfections that are proper to its nature? Is there any change either in the substance or qualities of it? No; but it makes a change in the body, and of a dull lump it makes it a living mass, conveys vigour and strength to it; and by its power, quickens it to sense and motion: so did the divine nature and human remain intire; there was no change of the one into the other, as Christ by a miracle changed water into wine, or men by art change sand or ashes into glass. And when *he prays for the glory he had with God before the world was*, he prays that a glory he had in his deity, might shine forth in his person as mediator, and be evidenced in that height and splendour suitable to his dignity which had been so lately darkened by his abasement; that as he had appeared to be the Son of man in the infirmity of the flesh, he might appear to be the Son of God in the glory of his person, that he might appear to be the Son of God and the son of man in one person, *John* 17. 5. † Again, there could be no change in this union; for in a real change, something is acquired which was not possessed before, neither formally nor eminently; but the divinity had from eternity, before the incarnation, all the perfections of the human nature eminently in a nobler manner than they are in themselves, and therefore could not be changed by a real union.

The *third* proposition. *Repentance and other affections ascribed to God in scripture, argue no change in God.*

* Zanch. de Immutab. Dei. Goulart de Immutab. de Dieu.
† Ganrach, in part. 1. Aquin. qu. 9. cap. 1.

We often read of God's *repenting*, repenting of the good he promised, and of the evil he threatened, or of the work he hath wrought, *Jer.* 18. 10. *Exod.* 32. 14. *John* 3. 10. *Gen.* 6. 6.

We must observe therefore,

1. That *repentance is not properly in God.* He is a *pure Spirit*, and is not capable of those passions, which are signs of weakness and impotence to which we are subject. Where there is a proper repentance, there is a want of foresight, an ignorance of what would succeed, or a defect in the examination of the occurrences, which might fall within consideration. All repentance of a fact, is grounded upon a mistake in the event, which was not foreseen; or upon an after knowledge of the evil of the thing which was acted by the person repenting. But God is so wise that he cannot err; so holy that he cannot do evil; and his certain prescience or foreknowledge, secures him against any unexpected events. God doth not act but upon clear and infallible reason: and a change upon passion is accounted by all so great a weakness in man, that none can entertain so unworthy a conceit of God. Where he is said to repent, he is also said to grieve; now no proper grief can be imagined to be in God. As repentance is inconsistent with infallible foresight, so is grief no less inconsistent with undefiled blessedness: *God is blessed for ever*, and therefore nothing can befall him that can stain that blessedness; his blessedness would be impaired and interrupted, while he is repenting, though he did soon rectify that which is the cause of his repentance: *God is of one mind and who can turn him? what his soul desires that he doth.*

2. *But God accommodates himself in the scripture to our weak capacity.* God hath no more of a proper repentance, than he hath of a real body; though he, in accommodation to our weakness ascribes to himself the members of our bodies to set out to our understanding the greatness of his perfections, we must not conclude him a body like us; so because he is said to have anger and repentance, we must not conclude him to have passions like us. When we cannot fully comprehend him

as he is, he clothes himself with our nature in his expressions that we may apprehend him as we are able, and by an inspection into ourselves, learn something of the nature of God; yet those human ways of speaking ought to be understood in a manner agreeable to the infinite excellency and majesty of God; and are only designed to mark out something in God which hath a resemblance to something in us. As we cannot speak to God as gods, but as men; so we cannot understand him speaking to us as a God, unless he condescends to speak to us like a man. God therefore frames his language to our dulness, not to his own state; and informs us by our own phrases, what he would have us learn of his nature; as nurses talk in broken language to young children. In all such expressions, therefore, we must ascribe the perfection we conceive in them to God, and lay the imperfection at the door of the creature.

3. Therefore *repentance in God is only a change of his outward conduct, according to his infallible foresight and immutable will.* He changes the way of his providential proceeding according to the carriage of the creature, without changing his will, which is the rule of his providence; when God speaks of his *repenting that he had made man, Gen.* 6. 6, it is only his changing his conduct from a way of kindness to a way of severity, and is a word suited to our capacities to signify his detestation of sin, and his resolution to punish it, after man had made himself quite another thing than God had made him; *It repents me,* that is, I am purposed to destroy the world; as he that repents of his work throws it away:* as if a potter cast away the vessel he had framed, it were a testimony that he repented that ever he took pains about it; so the destruction of them seems to be a repentance in God that ever he made them; it is a change of events, not of counsels. Repentance in us is a grief for a former act, and a changing of our course in it; grief is not in God,† but his repentance is a willing a thing should not be as it was, which will was fixed from eternity; for God foreseeing

* Mercer in loc. † Petavius Theol. Dogmat.

man would fall, and decreeing to permit it, he could not be said to repent in time of what he did not repent from eternity; and therefore if there were no repentance in God from eternity, there could be none in time.

But God is said to repent when he changes the disposition of affairs without himself; as men when they repent, alter the course of their actions, so God alters things, *extra se*, or without himself, but changes nothing of his own purpose within himself. It rather notes the action he is about to do, than any thing in his own nature, or any change in his eternal purpose. God's repenting of his kindness is nothing but an inflicting of punishment, which the creature by the change of his carriage hath merited: as his repenting of the evil threatened is the withholding the punishment denounced when the creature hath humbly submitted to his authority and acknowledged his crime. Or else we may understand those expressions of joy, and grief, and repentance, to signify thus much,* that the things declared to be the objects of joy, and grief, and repentance, are of that nature, that if God were capable of our passions, he would discover himself in such cases as we do: as when the prophets mention the joys and applaudings of heaven, earth, and the sea, they only signify that the things they speak of are so good, that if the heavens and the sea had natures capable of joy, they would express it upon that occasion in such a manner as we do: so would God have joy at the obedience of men, and grief at the unworthy carriage of men, and repent of his kindness, when men abuse it; and repent of his punishment, when men reform under his rod, were the majesty of his nature capable of such affections.

Fourthly. The not fulfilling of some predictions in scripture, which seem to imply a changeableness of the divine will, do not argue any change in it. As when he reprieved Hezekiah from death, after a message sent by the prophet Isaiah, *that he should die*, and when he made an arrest of that judgment he had threatened by Jonah against Nineveh. 2 *Kings* 20. 1, 5. *Isa.* 38. 1, 5. *John*

* Daille. in Sermon on 2 Pet. 3. 9. pa. 60.

3. 4, 10. There is not indeed the same reason of promises and threatenings altogether, for in promising, the obligation lies upon God, and the right to demand, is in the party that performs the condition of the promise: but in threatenings, the obligation lies upon the sinner, and God's right to punish is declared thereby: so that though God doth not punish, his will is not changed; because his will was to declare the demerit of sin, and his right to punish upon the commission of it; though he may not punish according to the strict letter of the threatening the person sinning, but relax his own law for the honour of his attributes, and transfer the punishment from the offender to a person substituted in his room; this was the case in the first threatening against man, and the substituting a surety in the place of the malefactor.

But the answer to these cases is this,* that where we find predictions in scripture not executed, we must consider them, not as absolute but conditional, or as the civil law calls it, an interlocutory sentence. God declared what would follow by natural causes, or by the demerit of man, not what he would absolutely himself do. And in many of those predictions, though the condition be not expressed, yet it is to be understood; so the promises of God are to be understood with the condition of perseverance in well doing; and threatenings with a clause of revocation annexed to them, provided that men repent. And this God lays down as a general case, always to be remembered as a rule for the interpreting his threatenings against a nation, and the same reason will hold in threatenings against a particular person, *Jer.* 18. 7, 8, 9, 10, *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and pull down, and destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them;* and so when he speaks of planting a nation, if they do evil, he will repent of the good, &c. It is a universal rule, by which all particular cases of this nature are to be tried; so that when man's repentance arrives, God remains firm in his first will, always equal to

* Rivet in Genes. exercista. 51. p. 213.

himself, and it is not he that changes, but man. For since the interposition of the Mediator, with an eye to whom God governed the world after the fall, the right of punishing was taken off if men repented, and mercy was to flow out, if by a conversion men returned to their duty, *Ezek.* 18. 20, 21. This I say is grounded upon God's entertaining the Mediator; for the covenant of works discovered no such thing as repentance or pardon. Now these general rules are to be the interpreters of particular cases. So that predictions of good are not to be counted absolute, if men return to evil; nor predictions of evil, if men be thereby reduced to a repentance of their crimes.

So Nineveh shall be destroyed, that is, according to the general rule, unless the inhabitants repent, which they did; they manifested a belief of the threatening, and gave glory to God by giving credit to the prophet: and they had a notion of this rule God lays down in the other prophets; for they had an apprehension that upon their humbling themselves they might escape the threatened vengeance, and stop the shooting those arrows that were ready in the bow.* Though Jonah proclaimed destruction without declaring any hopes of an arrest of judgment; yet their natural notions of God afforded some natural hopes of relief, if they did their duty, and spurned not the prophet's message; and therefore saith one, "God did not always express this condition, because it was needless; his own rule revealed in scripture was sufficient to some, and the natural notion all men had of God's goodness upon their repentance, made it not absolutely necessary to declare it: and besides, saith he, it is bootless; the expressing it can do but little good; secure ones will repent never the sooner, but rather presume upon their hopes of God's forbearance, and linger out their repentance till it be too late: and to work men to repentance, whom he hath purposed to spare, he threatens them with terrible judgments; which by how much the more terrible and peremptory they are, are

* Sanderson's Sermon, par. 2. p. 257. 258.

likely to be more effectual for the end God in his purpose designs them, viz. to humble them under a sense of their demerit, and an acknowledgment of his righteous justice; and therefore though they be absolutely denounced, yet they are to be conditionally interpreted with a reservation of repentance.

As for that answer which one gives, that by forty days was not meant forty natural days, but forty prophetical days, that is, years, a day for a year; and that the city was destroyed forty years after by the Medes: the expression of God's repenting upon their humiliation, puts a bar to that interpretation: God *repented*, that is, he did not bring the punishment upon them according to those days the prophet had expressed; and therefore forty natural days are to be understood; and if it were meant of forty years, and they were destroyed at the end of that term, how could God be said to repent, since according to that, the punishment threatened was according to the time fixed brought upon them? And the destruction of it forty years after, will not be easily evinced, if Jonah lived in the time of Jeroboam the second king of Israel, as he did, and Nineveh was destroyed in the time of Josiah king of Judah, 2 *Kings* 14. 25. But the other answer is plain. God did not fulfil what he had threatened, because they reformed what they had committed: when the threatening was made, they were fit objects for justice; but when they repented, they were fit objects for a merciful respite.

To threaten when sins are high, is a part of God's justice; not to execute when sins are revoked by repentance, is a part of God's goodness. And in the case of Hezekiah, 2 *Kings* 20. 1, 5. Isaiah comes with a message from God, that he should *set his house in order*, for he shall die; that is, the disease was mortal, and no outward applications could in their own nature resist it. *Isa.* 38. 1, 5, *Behold, I will add to thy days fifteeen years; I will heal thee:* It seems to me to be one entire message, because the latter part of it was so suddenly after the other committed to Isaiah to be delivered to Hezekiah; for he was not gone out of the king's house,

before he was ordered to return with the news of his health, by an extraordinary indulgence of God against the force of the disease: *Behold I will add to thy life*, noting it an extraordinary thing. He was in the second court of the king's house when this word came to him;* the king's house having three courts, so that he was not gone above half way out the palace. God might send this message of death, to prevent the pride of Hezekiah for his deliverance from Senacherib: as Paul had *a messenger of Satan to buffet him*, to prevent his being *exalted above measure*; and this good man was subject to this sin, as we find afterwards in the case of the Babylonish ambassadors: and God delayed this other part of the message to humble him, and draw out his prayer; and as soon as ever he found Hezekiah in this temper, he sent Isaiah with a comfortable message of recovery: so that the will of God was to signify to him the mortality of his distemper, and afterwards to relieve him by a message of an extraordinary recovery.

Fifth Proposition. *God is not changed, when of loving any creatures he becomes angry with them, or of angry he becomes appeased.* The change in these cases is in the creature; according to the alteration in the creature, it stands in a various relation to God; an *innocent* creature is the object of his kindness, an *offending* creature is the object of his anger; there is a change in the dispensation of God, as there is a change in the creature making himself capable of such dispensations. God always acts according to the immutable nature of his holiness, and can no more change in his affections to good and evil, than he can in his essence. When the devils, now fallen, stood as glorious angels, they were the objects of God's love, because holy: when they fell, they were the object of God's hatred, because impure; the same reason which made him love them while they were pure, made him hate them when they were criminal: the reason of his various dispensations to them was the same in both, as considered in God, his immutable

* 2 Kings 20. 4.

holiness; but as respecting the creature, different; the nature of the creature was changed, but the divine holy nature of God remained the same; *With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward, Psal.* 18. 26 He is a refreshing light to those that obey him, and a consuming fire to those that resist him.

Though the same angels were not always loved; yet the same reason that moved him to love them, moved him to hate them. It had argued a change in God, if he had loved them always, in whatsoever posture they were towards him: it could not be counted love, but an impotent fondness; the change is in the object not in the affection of God: for the object loved before, is not beloved now, because that which was the motive of love, is not now in it: so that the creature having a different state from what it had, falls under a different affection or dispensation.

It had been a mutable affection in God, to love that which was not worthy of love, with the same love wherewith he loved that which had the greatest resemblance to himself: Had God loved the fallen angels *in* that state, and *for* that state, he had hated himself, because he had loved that which was contrary to himself and the image of his own holiness, which made them appear before good in his sight. The will of God is unchangeably set to love righteousness, and hate iniquity, and from this hatred to punish it: and if a righteous creature contracts the wrath of God, or a sinful creature hath the communications of God's love; it must be by a change in themselves. Is the sun changed when it hardens one thing and softens another, according to the disposition of the several subjects? Or when the sun makes a flower more fragrant, and a dead carcase more noisome. There are divers effects, but the reason of that diversity is not in the sun, but in the subject; the sun is the same, and produceth those different effects, by the same quality of heat: so if an unholy soul approach to God; God looks angrily upon him; if a holy soul come before him, the same immutable perfection in God draws out his kindness towards him:

as some think, the sun would rather refresh than scorch us, if our bodies were of the same nature and substance with that luminary.

As the will of God for creating the world, was not new, but an eternal will, though it manifested itself in time; so the will of God for the punishment of sin, or the reconciliation of the sinner, was no new will: though his wrath in time breaks out in the effects of it upon sinners, and his love flows out in the effects of it upon penitents. Christ by his death, reconciling God to man, did not alter the will of God, but did what was consonant to his eternal will, he came not to change, but to execute his will. *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, Heb.* 10. 7. And the grace of God in Christ, was not new grace, but old grace in a new appearance; *the grace of God hath appeared, Tit.* 1, 11.

Sixth Proposition. *A change of laws by God argues no change in God, when God abrogates some laws which he had settled in the church and enacts others.* To what has been advanced upon this point before, I shall only add that God commanded one thing to the Jews, when the church was in an infant state; and removed those laws, when the church came to some growth. The elements of the word were suited to the state of children. A mother feeds not the infant with the same diet as she doth when it is grown up. Our Saviour acquainted not his disciples with some things at one time which he did at another, because they were not able to bear them. Where was the change, in Christ's will, or in their growth from a state of weakness to that of strength? A physician prescribes not the same thing to a person in health, as he doth to one conflicting with a distemper; nor the same thing in the beginning, as he doth in the state or declination of the disease. The physician's will and skill are the same, but the capacity and necessity of the patient for this or that medicine or method of proceeding are not the same.

When God changed the ceremonial law, there was no change in the divine will, but an execution of his will; for when God commanded the observance of the law he

intended not the perpetuity of it; nay, in the prophet he declares the cessation of it; he decreed to command it, but he decreed to command it only for such a time; so that the abrogation of it was no less an execution of his decree, than the establishment of it for a season was; the commanding of it was pursuant to his decree for the appointing of it, and the nulling of it was pursuant to his decree of continuing it only for such a season: so that in all this there was no change in the will of God. The counsel of God stands sure; what changes soever there are in the world, there are none in God or his will, but in the events of things, and the different relations of things to God. It is in the creature, not in the Creator. The sun always remains of the same hue, and is not discoloured in itself, because it shines green through a green glass, and blue through a blue glass; the different colours come from the glass, not from the sun: the change is always in the disposition of the creature, not in the nature of God or his will.

PART III.

THE IMMUTABILTY OF GOD A SOURCE OF INSTRUCTION AND CONSOLATION, &c.

The divine nature of Jesus—Immutability of Jehovah an incentive to his worship—The inconstancy of man—The awful state of determined sinners, and those who are careless in the discharge of the duty God requires—Unchangeableness of God a strong ground of consolation—The mutability of all created things—Affections not to be set upon them—Not to be trusted—God should be all in all—Patience in suffering his will—Christians should imitate an unchangeable God—Prelibations of eternal happiness.

FIFTHLY, THE use of the doctrine,

I. For *Information.*

1. If God be unchangeable in his nature, and immutability be a property of God, *then Christ hath a divine nature.* This in the Psalm is applied to Christ in *Heb.* chap. 1. 11. where joins the citation out of this Psalm with that out of Psalm 45. 6, 7. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows; and thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth,* &c. As the first must necessarily be meant of Christ the Mediator, and therein he is distinguished from God, as one anointed by him; so the other must be meant of Christ, whereby he is made one with God in regard of the creation and dissolution of the world, in regard of eternity and immutability. Both the testimonies are united by

the copulative and, *and thou Lord*, declaring thereby that they are both to be understood of the same person the Son of God: The design of the chapter is to prove Christ to be God; and such things are spoken of him as could not belong to any creature, no, not to the most excellent of the angels: the same person that is said to be anointed above his fellows, and is said to lay the foundation of the earth and heavens, is said to be *the same*, that is, the same in himself: this prerogative belongs to that person as well as the creation of heaven and earth.

The Socinians say, this is spoken of God, and that God shall destroy the heavens by Christ; if so, Christ is not a mere creature, not created when he was incarnate; for the same person that shall change the world did create the world; if God shall change the world by him, God also created the world by him; he was then before the world was; for how could God create the world by one that was not; that was not in being till after the creation of the world? The heavens shall be changed, but the person who is to change the heavens, is said to be the same, or unchangeable, in the creation as well as the dissolution of the world. This sameness refers to the whole sentence.

* The psalm wherein the text is, and whence this in the Hebrews is cited, is properly referred to Christ, and redemption by him, and the completing of it at the last day, and not to the Babylonish captivity. That captivity was not so deplorable as the state of the psalmist describes. Daniel and his companions flourished in that captivity: it could not reasonably be said of them, that their days were consumed like smoke, their heart *withered like grass;* that they forgot to *eat their bread:* besides, he complains of *shortness of life;* but none had any more reason to complain of that in the time of the captivity, than before and after it, than at any other time; their deliverance would contribute nothing to the natural length of their lives. Besides, when Sion should be built, the heathen should *fear the name of the Lord, and*

* Placeus de deitate Christi.

all the kings of the earth his glory. The rearing of the second temple after the deliverance, did not proselyte the nations; nor did the kings of the earth worship the glory of God; nor did God appear in such glory at the erecting the second temple. The second temple was less glorious than the first, for it wanted some of the ornaments which were the glory of the first; but it is said of this state, that when the Lord should *build up Sion*, he should *appear in his glory;* his proper glory, and extraordinary glory. Now *that God who shall appear in glory*, and build up Sion, is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. He build up the church, he causeth the nations to fear the Lord, and the kings of the earth his glory; he broke down the partition wall, and opened a door for the entrance of the Gentiles; he struck the chains from off the prisoners, and loosed those that *were appointed to death* by the curse of the law.

And to this person is ascribed the creation of the world; and he is pronounced to remain the same in the midst of an infinite number of changes in inferior things. And it is likely the psalmist considers not only the beginning of redemption, but the completing of it at the second coming of Christ; for he complains of those evils which shall be removed by his second coming, viz. the shortness of life, persecutions and reproaches wherewith the church is afflicted in this world; and comforts not himself with those attributes which are directly opposed to sin, as the mercy of God, but with those that are opposed to mortality and calamities; as the unchangeableness and eternity of God; and from thence infers a perpetual establishment of believers, *the children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee;* so that the psalm itself seems to aim in the whole discouse at Christ, and asserts his divinity, which the apostle as an interpreter doth fully evidence; applying it to him, and manifesting his Deity by his immutability as well as his eternity. * While all other things lose their forms, and pass through multitudes of variations, he constantly remains the same, and shall be

* Daile Melang. des Sermons, part 2. sect. 1. p. 8, 9, 10. &c.

the same, when all the empires of the world shall slide away, and a period be put to the present motions of the creation; and as there was no change made in his being by the creation of things, so neither shall there be the final alteration of things; he shall see them finish, as he saw them rise up into being, and be the same after their reign, as he was before their original; he is *the first and the last.*

2. Here is *ground and encouragement for worship.* An atheist will make another use of this. If God be immutable, why should we worship him, why should we pray to him; good will come if he wills it, evil cannot be averted by all our supplications, if he hath ordered it to fall upon us? But certainly since unchangeableness in knowing, and willing goodness is a perfection; adoration and admiration are due to God, upon the account of this excellence. If he be God he is to be reverenced, and the more highly reverenced, because he cannot but be God.

Again, what comfort could it be to pray to a God that like the cameleon changed colours every day, every moment? What encouragement could there be to lift up our eyes to one that were of one mind this day, and of another mind to-morrow? Who would put up a petition to an earthly prince that were so mutable, as to grant a petition one day, and deny it another, and change his own act? But if a prince promise this or that thing upon such or such a condition, and you know his promise to be as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, would any man reason thus?—Because it is unchangeable we will not seek to him, we will not perform the condition, upon which the fruit of the proclamation is to be enjoyed. Who would not count such an inference ridiculous? What blessings hath not God promised upon the condition of seeking him? Were he of an unrighteous nature, or changeable in his mind, this would be a bar to our seeking him, and frustrate our hopes: but since it is otherwise, is not this excellency of his nature the highest encouragement to ask of him the blessings he hath promised, and a beam from heaven to fire our zeal in asking? If you desire things against his will, which he hath declared he will not grant,

prayer then, would be an act of disobedience, an injury to him, as well as an act of folly in itself; his unchangeableness then might stifle such desires: but if we ask according to his will, and according to our reasonable wants, what ground have we to make such a ridiculous argument?

He hath willed every thing that may be for our good, if we perform the condition he hath required; and hath put it upon record, that we may know it and regulate our desires and supplications according to it. If we will not seek him, his immutability cannot be a bar, but our own folly; and by our neglect we despoil him of this perfection as to us, and either insinuate that he is not sincere, and means not as he speaks; or that he is as changeable as the wind, and not at all to be confided in. If we ask according to his revealed will, the unchangeableness of his nature will assure us of the grant; and what presumption would it be in a creature dependent upon his sovereign, to ask that which he knows he has declared to be against his will, since there is no good we can want, but he hath promised to give, upon our sincere and ardent desire for it.

God hath decreed to give this or that to man, but conditionally, and by the means of enquiring after him, and asking for it, *Ezek.* 36. 37. *Mat.* 7. 7, *Ask and you shall receive;* as much as to say, you shall not receive unless you ask. When the highest promises are made, God expects they should be put in suit: our Saviour joins the promise and the petition together; the promise to encourage the petition, and the petition to enjoy the promise: he doth not say *perhaps* it shall be given, but it *shall*, that is, it certainly shall; your heavenly Father is unchangeably willing to give you those things. We must depend upon his immutability for the thing, and submit to his wisdom for the time.

Prayer is an acknowledgment of our dependence upon God, which dependence could have no firm foundation without unchangeableness. Prayer doth not desire any change in God, but is offered to God that he would confer those things which he hath immutably willed to com-

municate, but he willed them not without prayer as the means of bestowing them. The light of the sun is ordered for our comfort, for the discovery of visible things, for the ripening the fruits of the earth; but withal it is required that we use our faculty of seeing, that we employ our industry in sowing and planting, and expose our fruits to the view of the sun, that they may receive the influence of it. If a man shuts his eyes, and complains that the sun is changed into darkness, it would be ridiculous; the sun is not changed, but we alter ourselves; nor is God changed in not giving us the blessings he hath promised, because he hath promised in the way of a due address to him, and opening our souls to receive his influence; and to this, his immutability is the greatest encouragement.

3. This shews *how contrary man is to God in regard of his inconstancy.* What an infinite distance is there between the immutable God, and mutable man, and how should we bewail this instability in our nature? There is a mutability in us as creatures, and a creature cannot but be mutable by nature, otherwise it were not a creature but God. The establishment of any creature is from grace and gift; naturally we tend to nothing, as we come from nothing: this creature-mutability is not our sin, yet it should cause us to lie down under a sense of our own nothingness, in the presence of the Creator. The angels as creatures, though not corrupt, cover their faces before him: and the arguments God uses to humble Job, though a fallen creature, are not from his corruption; for I do not remember that he taxed him with that; but from the *greatness of his majesty and excellency of his nature, declared in his works, chap.* 38. 39, 40, 41. And therefore men that have no sense of God, and humility before him, forget that they are creatures as well as corrupt ones.

How great is the distance between God and us, in regard of our inconstancy in good, which is not natural to us by creation? For the mind and affections were regular, and by the great Artificer were pointed to God as the object of knowledge and love. We have the same faculties of understanding, will, and affection as Adam had in innocence; but not with the same light, the same bias,

and the same ballast. Man by his fall, wounded his head and heart; the wound in his head made him unstable in the truth, and that in his heart unsteadfast in his affections: he changed himself from the image of God to that of the devil, from innocence to corruption; and from an ability to be steadfast, to a perpetual inconstancy: *His silver became dross, and his wine was mixed with water. Isa.* 1. 22. He changed,

1. *To inconstancy in truth, opposed to the immutability of knowledge in God.* How are our minds floating between ignorance and knowledge. Truth in us is like those ephemera creatures of a day's continuance, which spring up in the morning and expire at night. How soon doth that fly away from us, which we have had, not only some weak flashes of, but which we have learned, and have had some relish of? *The devil stood not in the truth,* and therefore manages his engines to make us as unstable as himself: our minds reel, and corrupt reasonings oversway us; like sponges we suck up water, and a light compression makes us spout it out again. Truths are not engraven upon our hearts, but writ as in dust, defaced by the next puff of wind; *carried about with every wind of doctrine, Eph.* 4. 14. Like a ship without a pilot and sails, at the courtesy of every storm; or like clouds that are tenants to the wind and sun, moved by the wind, and melted by the sun. The Galatians were no sooner called into the grace of God, but they were removed from it*; and how many are like him that believed the soul's immortality, no longer than he had Plato's book of that subject in his hand.* One likens such to children; they play with truths as children do with toys, one while embrace them, and a little after throw them away. How soon do we forget what the truth is delivered to us, and what it represented us to be? Is it not a thing to be bewailed, that man should be such a weathercock, turned about with every breath of wind.

2. *Inconstancy in will and affections opposed* to the immutability of will in God. We waver between God and

* Sedgwick Christ's Counsel. p. 230

Baal; and while we are not only resolving, but upon motion a little way, look back with a hankering after Sodom; sometimes lifted up with heavenly intentions, and presently cast down with earthly cares; like a ship, that by an advancing wave seems to aspire to heaven, and the next fall of the waves makes it sink down to the depths. We change purposes oftener than fashions; and our resolutions are like letters in water, whereof no mark remains: we will be as John to day to love Christ, and as Judas to-morrow to betray him, and by an unworthy levity, pass into the camp of the enemies of God; resolved to be as holy as angels in the morning, when the evening beholds us as impure as devils. How often do we hate what before we loved, and shun what before we longed for? And our resolutions are like vessels of crystal, which break at the first knock, are dashed in pieces by the next temptation. Saul resolved not to persecute David any more, but you soon find him upon his old game.

Pharaoh more than once promised, and probably resolved, to let Israel go; but at the end of the storm his purposes vanish. When affliction lies heavy upon men, they intend to change their course; and the next news of ease changes their intentions: like a bow not fully bent in their inclinations, they cannot reach the mark, but live many years between resolutions of obedience, and affections to rebellion *: And the promises men make to God are often the fruit of their passion, their fear, not of their will. The Israelites were startled at the terrors wherewith the law was delivered, and promised obedience; but a month after forgot them, and make a golden calf, and in the sight of Sinai, call for and dance before their gods: never were people more inconstant. Peter, who vowed an allegiance to his master, and courage to abide with him, forswears him almost with the same breath. Those that cry out with zeal, *the Lord he is God*, shortly after return to the service of their idols, 1 *Kings*, 18.·39. That which seems to be our pleasure this day, is our vexation

* Psal. 78. 17.

to-morrow: a fear of judgment puts us into a religious pang, and a love to our lusts reduceth us to a rebellious inclination. Salvation and damnation present themselves to us, touch us, and engender some weak wishes, which are dissolved by the next allurements of a carnal interest. No hold can be taken of our promises; no credit is to be given to our resolutions.

3. *Inconstancy in practice.* How much beginning in the spirit, and ending in the flesh; one day in the sanctuary, another in the stews; clear in the morning as the sun, and clouded before noon; in heaven by an excellency of gifts, in hell by a course of prophaneness? Like a flower, which some mention, that changes its colour three times a day; one part white, then purple, then yellow. The spirit lusts against the flesh, and the flesh quickly triumphs over the spirit. In a good man, how often is there a spiritual lethargy? Though he doth not openly defame God, yet he doth not always glorify him: he doth not forsake the truth, but he doth not always make the attainment of it, and settlement in it his business. This levity discovers itself in religious duties, *when I would do good evil is present with me, Rom.* 7. 21. Never more present than when we have a mind to do good, and never more present than when we have a mind to do the best and greatest good. How hard is it to make our thoughts and affections keep their stand? Place them upon a good object, and they will fly from it, as a bird from one bough, one fruit, to another. We vary postures according to the various objects we meet with. The course of the world is very airy, suited to the uncertain motions of that *Prince of the power of the air*, which works in it. This ought to be bewailed by us. Though we may stand fast in the truth, though we may spin our resolutions into a firm web, though the spirit may triumph over the flesh in our practice, yet we ought to bewail it, because inconstancy is our nature, and what stability we have in good is from grace. What we find practised by most men, is natural to all*: *As face answers to face in a glass*, so doth heart to heart;

* Lawrence of Faith, p. 262.

a face in a glass is not more like a natural face, whose image it is, than one man's heart is naturally like another.

This inconstancy is natural to those who are *out of the church*. Nebuchadnezzar is so affected with Daniel's prophetic spirit, that he would have none accounted the true God, but *the God of Daniel*. How soon does this notion slip from him, and an image must be set up for all to worship, upon pain of a most cruel death? Daniel's God is quite forgotten. The miraculous deliverance of the three children for not worshipping his image, makes him settle a decree, to secure the honour of God from the reproach of his subjects; yet a little while after, you have him strutting in his palace, as if there were no God but himself.

Such inconstancy is natural to those *in the church*. The Israelites were the only church God had in the world, and a notable example of inconstancy. After the miracles of Egypt they murmured against God, when they saw Pharaoh marching with an army at their heels. They desired food, and soon nauseated the manna they were before so fond of. When they came into Canaan, they sometimes worshipped God, and sometimes idols, not only the idols of one nation, but of all their neighbours: in which regard God calls this his *heritage a speckled bird*, *Jer.* 12. 9, a peacock, saith Hierom, inconstant, made up of varieties of idolatrous colours and ceremonies. This levity of spirit is the root of all mischief; it scatters our thoughts in the service of God, it is the cause of all revolts and apostacies from him, it makes us unfit to receive the communications of God; whatsoever we hear is like words written in sand, ruffled out by the next gale; whatsoever is put into us is like precious liquor in a palsied hand soon spilled. It breeds distrust of God: when we have an uncertain judgment of him, we are not like to confide in him; an uncertain judgment will be followed with a distrustful heart. In fine, wherever it is prevalent, it is a certain sign of ungodliness; to be driven with the wind like chaff, and to be ungodly is all one, in the judgment of the Holy Ghost, *Psal.* 1. 4, *The ungodly are like the chaff which*

the wind driveth away, which signifies not their destruction, but their disposition, for their destruction is inferred from it, ver. 5, *Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in judgment*. How contrary is this to the unchangeable God, who is always the same, and would have us the same, in our religious promises and resolutions for good?

4. If God be immutable, it is sad news to those *that are resolved in wickedness, or careless of returning to that duty he requires*. Sinners must not expect, that God will alter his will, make a breach upon his nature, and violate his own word to gratify their lusts. No, it is not reasonable God should dishonour himself to secure them, and cease to be God that they may continue to be wicked, by changing his own nature, that they may be unchanged in their vanity. God is the same; goodness is as amiable in his sight, and sin as abominable in his eyes now, as it was at the beginning of the world. Being the same God, he is the same enemy to the wicked, as the same friend to the righteous; he is the same in knowledge, and cannot forget sinful acts; he is the same in will, and cannot approve of unrighteous practices. Goodness cannot but be always the object of his love, and wickedness cannot but be always the object of his hatred: and as his aversion to sin is always the same, so as he hath been in his judgments upon sinners, the same he will be still; for the same perfection of immutability belongs to his justice for the punishment of sin, as to his holiness for his disaffection to sin.

Though the covenant of works was changeable by the crime of man violating it; yet it was unchangeable in regard of God's justice vindicating it, which is inflexible in the punishment of the breaches of his law. The law had a preceptive part, and a minatory part; when man changed the observation of the precept, the righteous nature of God could not null the execution of the threatening. He could not upon the account of this perfection neglect his just word, and countenance the unrighteous transgression. Though there were no more rational creatures in being but Adam and Eve, yet God subjected them to that death he had assured them of: and from this immutability of his will, ariseth the necessity of the suffer-

ing of the Son of God, for the relief of the apostate creature. His will in the second covenant is as unchangeable as that in the first, only repentance is settled as the condition of the second, which was not indulged in the first; and without repentance the sinner must irrevocably perish or God must change his nature. There must be a change in man, there can be none in God; *his bow is bent, his arrows are ready, if the wicked do not turn. Psal.* 7. 11. There is not an atheist, an hypocrite, a prophane person, that ever was upon the earth, but God's soul abhorred him as such, and the like he will abhor for ever: while any therefore continue so, they may sooner expect the heavens should roll as they please, the sun stand still at their order, the stars change their course at their beck, than that God should change his nature, which is opposite to prophaneness and vanity. *Who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered, Job* 9. 4.

II. The *comfort* of the divine immutability.

The immutability of God is *a strong ground of consolation.* Subjects wish a good prince to live for ever, as being loath to change him; but care not how soon they are rid of an oppressor. This unchangeableness of God's will, shews him as ready to accept any that come to him as ever he was; so that we may with confidence make our addresses to him, since he cannot change his affections to goodness. The fear of change in a friend hinders a full reliance upon him; an assurance of stability encourages hope and confidence. This attribute is the strongest prop for faith in all our addresses; it is not a single perfection, but the glory of all those, that belong to his nature; for he is unchangeable in his love, *Jer.* 31. 3, and in his truth, *Psal.* 117. 2. The more solemn revelation of himself in this name Jehovah, which signifies chiefly his eternity and immutability, was to support the Israelites' faith, in expectation of a deliverance from Egypt, that he had not retracted his purpose, and his promise, made to Abraham for giving Canaan to his posterity, *Exod.* 3. 14, 15, 16, 17. Herein is the basis and strength of all his promises; therefore saith the psalmist, *those that know thy name, will put their trust*

in thee; those that are spiritually acquainted with thy name Jehovah, and have a true sense of it upon their hearts, will put their trust in thee, *Psal* 9. 10. His goodness could not be distrusted, if his unchangeableness were well apprehended and considered: all distrust would fly before it as darkness before the sun; it only gets advantage of us, when we are not well grounded in his name; and if ever we trusted God, we have the same reason to trust him for ever, *Isa.* 26. 4. *Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength*, or as it is in the Hebrew, *a rock of ages;* that is, perpetually unchangeable. We find the traces of God's immutability in the creatures; he has by his peremptory decree, set bounds to the sea; *hitherto shalt thou come but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed, Job* 38. 11. Do we fear the sea overflowing us in this island? No, because of his fixed decree; and is not his promise in his word, as unchangeable as his word concerning inanimate things, as good a ground to rest upon?

1. The *covenant* stands unchangeable. Mutable creatures break their leagues and covenants, and snap them asunder like Sampson's cords, when they are not accommodated to their interests. But an unchangeable God keeps his; *the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor shall the covenant of my peace be removed, Isa.* 54. 10. The heaven and earth shall sooner fall asunder, and the strongest and firmest parts of the creation crumble to dust, than one *iota* of my covenant shall fail. It depends upon the unchangeableness of his will, and the unchangeableness of his word, and therefore is called *the immutability of his counsel, Heb.* 6. 17. It is the fruit of the everlasting purpose of God; whence the apostle links *purpose* and *grace* together, 2 *Tim.* 1. 9. A covenant with a nation may be changeable, because it may not be built upon the eternal purpose of God to *put his fear in the heart*, but with respect to the creature's obedience.

Thus God, *Psal.* 132. 14, chose Jerusalem as the place wherein he would dwell for ever, yet he threatens to depart from them, when they had broken covenant

with him, and *the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city to the mountain on the east side, Ezek.* 11. 33. The covenant of grace does not run, *I will be your God, if you will be my people;* but, *I will be their God, and they shall be my people, Hos.* 2. 19. &c. *I will betroth thee to me for ever, I will say thou art my people, and they shall say thou art my God.* His everlasting purpose is to write his laws in the hearts of the elect. He puts a condition to his covenant of grace, the condition of faith, and he resolves to work that condition in the hearts of the elect; and therefore believers have two immutable pillars for their support, stronger than those erected by Solomon at the porch of the temple, 1 *Kings* 7. 21, called Jachin and Boaz, to note the firmness of that building dedicated to God; these are election or the standing counsel of God, and the covenant of grace. He will not revoke the covenant and blot the names of his elect out of the book of life.

2. *Perseverance* is ascertained. It consists not with the majesty of God to call a person effectually to himself to day, to make him fit for his eternal love, to give him faith, and take away that faith to-morrow. His effectual call is the fruit of his eternal election, and that counsel hath no other foundation, but his constant and unchangeable will; a foundation that stands sure, and therefore called the foundation of God, and not of the creature. It is not founded upon our own natural strength, it may be then subject to change, as all the products of nature are; the fallen angels had created grace in their innocency, but lost it by their fall. * Were this the foundation of the creature, it might soon be shaken; since man after his revolt can ascribe nothing constant to himself, but his own inconstancy. But the foundation is not in the infirmity of nature, but the strength of grace, and of the grace of God who is immutable, who wants not virtue to be able, nor kindness to be willing, to preserve his own foundation.

To what purpose doth our Saviour tell his disciples,

* Turretin Ser. p. 322.

Luke 10. 20, their *names were written in heaven*, but to mark the infallible certainty of their salvation, by an opposition to those things which perish and have their *names written in the earth*, or upon the sand, where they may be defaced? *Jer.* 17. 23. And why should Christ order his disciples to rejoice that their names were written in heaven, if God were changeable to blot them out again? Or why should the apostle assure us, that though God had rejected the greatest part of the Jews, he had not therefore rejected his people elected according to his purpose and immutable counsel; because there are none of the elect of God but will come to salvation; for he says, *Rom.* 11. 7, *the election hath obtained it;* that is, all those that are of the election have obtained it, and the others are hardened; where the seal of sanctification is stamped, it is a testimony of God's election, and that foundation shall stand sure. 2 *Tim.* 2. 19, *The foundation of the Lord stands sure having this seal, the Lord knows who are his*, that is the foundation, *the naming the name of Christ*, or believing in Christ, and *departing from iniquity* is the seal.

* As it is impossible, when God calls those things that are not, but they should spring up into being and appear before him, so it is impossible, but that the seed of God by his eternal purpose, should be brought to a spiritual life; and that calling cannot be retracted; for that *gift and calling is without repentance. Rom.* 11. 29. And when repentance is removed from God in regard of some works, the immutability of those works is declared: and the reason of that immutability is their pure dependence on the eternal favour and unchangeable grace of God, *purposed in himself*, and not upon the mutability of the creature. *Eph.* 1. 9, 11. Hence their happiness is not as patents among men, *quam diu bene se gesserint*, so long as they behave themselves well, but they have a promise, that they shall behave themselves so as never wholly to depart from God, *Jer.* 32. 40, *I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts,*

* Cocceius.

that they shall not depart from me. God will not turn from them, to do them good, and promiseth that they shall not turn from him for ever, or forsake him: and the bottom of it is the everlasting covenant, and therefore believing and sealing, for security, are linked together, *Eph.* 1. 13. And when God inwardly teaches us his law, he puts in a will not to depart from it: *Psa.* 119. 102, *I have not departed from thy judgments;* what is the reason? *For thou hast taught me.*

3. By this, *eternal happiness is ensured.* This is the inference made from the eternity and unchangeableness of God in the verse following the text, ver. 23, *The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee;* this is the sole conclusion drawn from those perfections of God solemnly asserted before. The children which the prophets and apostles have begotten to thee, shall be totally delivered from the reliques of their apostacy and the punishment due to them, and rendered partakers of immortality with thee, as sons to dwell in their father's house for ever. The spirit begins a spiritual life here, to fit for an immutable life in glory hereafter; where believers shall be placed upon a throne that cannot be shaken, and possess a crown that shall not be taken off their heads for ever.

III. The doctrine of Jehovah's immutability suggests important matter for *exhortation.*

1. Let a sense of the changeableness and uncertainty of *all other things* beside God, be upon us. There are as many changes as there are figures in the world. The whole fashion of the world is a transient thing; every man may say as Job, *Job* 10. 17, *Changes and war are against me.* Lot chose the plain of Sodom, because it was the richer soil: he was but a little time there before he was taken prisoner, and his substance made the spoil of his enemy: that is again restored; but a while after, fire from heaven devours his wealth, though his person was secured from the judgment by a special providence. We burn with a desire to settle ourselves, but mistake the way, and build castles in the air, which vanish like bubbles in the water. And therefore,

Let not *our thoughts dwell much upon them.* Do but consider those souls that are in the possession of an unchangeable God, that behold his never fading glory! Would it not be a kind of hell to them, to have their thoughts starting out to these things, or find any desire in themselves to the changeable trifles of the earth? Nay, have we not reason to think, that they cover their faces with shame, that ever they should have such weakness of spirit when they were here below, as to spend more thoughts upon them than were necessary for this present life; much more that they should at any time value and court them above an unchangeable good? Do they not disdain themselves that they should ever debase the immutable perfections of God, as to have neglecting thoughts of him at any time, for the entertainment of such a mean and inconstant rival?

Much less should we *trust in them or rejoice in them.* The best things are mutable, and things of such a nature are not fit objects of confidence: trust not in *riches;* they have their wanes as well as increases; they rise sometimes like a torrent and flow in upon men, but resemble also a torrent in as sudden a fall and departure, and leave nothing but slime behind them. Trust not in *honour*, all the honour and applause in the world, is no better than an inheritance of wind, which the pilot is not sure of, but shifts from one corner to another, and stands not perpetually in the same point of the heavens. How in a few ages did the house of David, a great monarch, and a man after God's own heart, descend to a mean condition; and all the glory of that house shut up in the stock of a carpenter? David's sheephook was turned into a sceptre, and the sceptre by the same hand of providence turned into a hatchet in Joseph his descendant.

Rejoice not immoderately in *wisdom;* that and learning languish with age. A wound in the head may impair that which is the glory of a man. If an organ be out of frame, folly may succeed, and all a man's prudence be wound up in an irrecoverable dotage. Nebuchadnezzar was no fool, yet by a sudden hand of God he became not only a fool or a mad-man, but a kind of brute. Rejoice

not in *strength*, that decays; and a mighty man may live to see his strong arm withered, and a *grasshopper to become a burthen. The strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders shall cease because they are few.* Nor rejoice in *children;* they are like birds upon a tree, that make a little chirping music, and presently fall into the fowler's net. Little did Job expect such sad news as the loss of all his progeny, at a blow, when the messenger knocked at his gate: and such changes happen oftentimes, when our expectations of comfort, and contentment in them are at the highest. How often doth a string break when the musician hath wound it up to a just height for a tune, and all his pains and delight marred in a moment? Nay, all these things change while we are using them, like ice that melts between our fingers, and flowers that wither while we are smelling them.

The apostle gave them a good title, when he called them *uncertain riches*, and thought it a strong argument to dissuade them from *trusting* in them, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. The wealth of the merchant depends upon the winds and waves, and the revenue of the husbandman upon the clouds; and since they depend upon those things which are used to express the most changeableness, they can be no fit object for trust. Besides, God sometimes kindles a *fire under all a man's glory*, which doth insensibly consume it; and while we have them, the fear of losing them renders us not very happy in the fruition of them; we can scarce tell whether they are contentments or no, because sorrow follows them so close. It is not an unnecessary exhortation for good men; the best men have been apt to place too much trust in them. David thought himself immutable in his prosperity; and such thoughts could not be without some immoderate outlets of the heart to them, and confidences in them; and Job promised himself to die in his nest, and *multiply his days as the sand* without any interruption; but he was mistaken and disappointed, *Job* 29. 18, 19. &c. Let me add this: trust not in *men* who are as inconstant as any thing else, and often change their most ardent affections into implacable hatred; and though their affections may not be

changed, their power to help you may. Haman's friends that depended on him one day, were woefully disappointed the next, when their patron was to exchange his chariot of state for an ignominious gallows.

Prefer *an immutable God before mutable creatures.* Is it not a horrible thing to see what we are, and what we possess, daily crumbling to dust, and in a continual departing from us; and not seek out something that is permanent, and always abides the same, for our portion? In God, or wisdom, which is Christ, there is *substance,* in which respect he is opposed to all things in the world, that are but shadows, that are shorter or longer according to the motion of the sun; mutable also, by every little body that intervenes. God is subject to no decay within, to no force without; nothing in his own nature can change him from what he is, and there is no power above can hinder him from being what he will to the soul: he is an ocean of all perfection: he wants nothing without himself to render him blessed, which may allure him to a change: his creatures can want nothing out of him to make them happy, whereby they may be inticed to prefer any thing before him. If we enjoy other things, it is by God's donation, who can as well withdraw them as bestow them; and it is but a reasonable as well as a necessary thing, to endeavour the enjoyment of the immutable Benefactor, rather than his revocable gifts.

If the creatures had a sufficient virtue in themselves to engross our souls, yet when we take a prospect of a fixed and unchangeable being, what beauty, what strength have any of those things to vie with him? How can they bear up and maintain their interest against a lively thought and sense of God? All the glory of them would fly before him, like that of the stars before the sun: They were once nothing, they may be nothing again; as their own nature brought them not out of nothing, so their nature secures them not from being reduced to nothing. What an unhappiness is it, to have our affections set upon that which retains something of its *non-esse,* with its *esse,* its not being with its being; that lives

indeed, but in a continual flux, and may lose that pleasureableness to-morrow which charms us to day?

2. This doctrine will teach us *patience* under such providences as declare his unchangeable will. The rectitude of our wills consists in conformity to the divine, as discovered in his works, and manifested in his providence, which are the efluxes of his immutable will. The time of trial is appointed by his *immutable will;* it is not in the power of the sufferer's will to shorten it, nor in the power of the enemies' will to lengthen it. Whatsoever happens hath been decreed by God, *Eccles.* 6. 10. *That which hath been is named already,* therefore to murmur or be discontented, is to contend with God, who is mightier than we to maintain his own purposes. God orders all things for that immutable end intended by himself, and according to the reason of his own divine will, in the true point of time most proper for it and for us, not too soon or too slow, because he is unchangeable in knowledge and wisdom.

God does not act any thing barely by an immutable will, but by an immutable wisdom, and an unchangeable rule of goodness; and therefore we should not only acquiesce in what he works, but have a complacency in it; and by having our wills thus knitting themselves with the immutable will of God, we attain some degree of likeness to him in his own unchangeableness. When therefore God hath manifested his will in opening his decree to the world by his work of providence; we must cease all disputes against it, and with Aaron *hold our peace,* though the affliction be very smart. *All flesh must be silent before God;* for whatsoever is his counsel shall stand, and cannot be recalled; all struggling against it, is like a brittle glass contending with a rock; for *if he cut off and shut up, or gather together,* then *who can hinder him? Job* 11. 10. Nothing can help us, if he hath determined to afflict us; as nothing can hurt us, if he hath determined to secure us. The more clearly God hath evidenced this or that to be his will, the more sinful is our struggling against it.

Pharaoh's sin was the greater in keeping Israel, by

how much the more God's miracles had been demonstrations of his settled will to deliver them. Let nothing lead our hearts to a contradiction to him, but let us fear and give glory to him, when the hour of judgment, which he hath appointed, is come; that is, comply with the unchangeable will of his precept, the more he declares the immutable will of his providence. *Rev.* 14. 7. We must not think, God must disgrace his nature and change his proceedings for us: better the creature should suffer, than God be impaired in any of his perfections. If God changed his purpose, he would change his nature. Patience is the way to perform the immutable will of God, and a means to attain a gracious immutability for ourselves by receiving the promise. *Heb.* 10. 36. *Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.*

3. This doctrine will teach us to *imitate God* in this perfection by striving to be immoveable in goodness. God never goes back from himself, he finds nothing better than himself for which he should change; and can we find any thing better than God to allure our hearts to a change from him? The sun never declines from the ecliptic line, nor should we from the paths of holiness. A steadfast obedience is encouraged by an unchangeable God to reward it, 1 *Cor.* 15. 58. *Be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* Unsteadfastness is the mark of an hypocrite, steadfastness of a saint. It is the character of a righteous person to *keep the truth, Isa.* 26. 2, and it is as positively said, that *he that abides not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God,* 2 *Epist. John* 9, but he that does, *hath both the Father and the Son.* So much of uncertainty, so much of nature; so much of firmness in duty, so much of grace. We can never honour God unless we finish his work; as Christ did not glorify God but in *finishing the work God gave him to do.* The nearer the world comes to an end, the more is God's immutability seen in his promises and predictions, and the more must our unchangeableness be seen in our obedience, *Heb.* 10. 23, 35,

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, and so much the more as you see the day approaching. The christian Jews were to be the more tenacious of their faith, the nearer they saw the day approaching, the day of Jerusalem's destruction prophesied of by Daniel, the accomplishment of which must be a great argument to establish the christian Jews in the profession of Christ to be the Messiah; because the destruction of the city was not to be before the cutting off the Messiah. Let us be therefore constant in our profession and service of God, and not suffer ourselves to be driven from him by the ill usage, or flattered from him by the caresses of the world.

This is *reasonable.* If God be unchangeable in doing us good, it is reason we should be unchangeable in doing him service. If he assures us that he is our God, our *I am*, he would also that we should be his people. If he declares himself constant in his promises, he expects we should be so in our obedience: as a spouse, we should be unchangeably faithful to him as a husband; as subjects, have an unchangeable allegiance to him as our prince. He would not have us *faithful* to him for an hour or a day, but *to the death;* and it is reason we should be his; and if we be his children, imitate him in his constancy to his holy purposes.

To imitate God is our *glory and interest.* To be a reed shaken with every wind, is no commendation among men, and it is less a ground of praise with God. It was Job's glory that he held fast his integrity; *In all this Job sinned not;* in all this, which whole cities and kingdoms would have thought ground enough of high exclamations against God: and also against the temptation of his wife, he retained his integrity, *Job 2. 9, dost thou still retain thy integrity?* The devil who by God's permission stripped him of his goods and health, yet could not strip him of his grace. As a traveller, when the wind and snow beats in his face, wraps his cloak more closely about him to preserve that and himself. Better we had never made profession, than afterwards to abandon it; such a withering profession serves for no other

use than to aggravate the crime, if any of us fly like a coward or revolt like a traitor. What profit will it be to a soldier, that he hath withstood many assaults, if he turn his back at last? if we would have God to crown us with immutable glory, we must crown our beginnings with a happy perseverance, *Rev.* 2. 10, *Be faithful to death and I will give thee a crown of life:* not as though this were the cause to merit it, but a necessary condition to possess it.

3. By an unchangeable disposition to good we should *begin the happiness of heaven upon earth.* This is the perfection of blessed spirits, those that are nearest to God, as angels and glorified souls, they are immutable; not indeed by nature, but by grace; yet not only by a necessity of grace, but a liberty of will: grace will not let them change; and that grace animates their wills that they would not change; an immutable God fills their understandings and affections, and gives satisfaction to their desires. The saints when they were below, tried other things and found them deficient: but now they are so fully satisfied with the beatific vision, that if Satan should have entrance among the angels and sons of God, it is not likely he should have any influence upon them; he could not present to their understandings any thing that could, either at the first glance, or upon a deliberate view, be preferable to what they enjoy and are fixed in.

Well then, let us be immoveable in the knowledge and love of God. It is the delight of God to see his creatures resemble him in what they are able. Let not our affections to him be as Jonah's gourd, growing up in one night and withering the next. Let us not only fight a *good fight,* but do so till we have finished our course, and imitate God in an unchangeableness of holy purposes; and to that purpose, examine ourselves daily what degree of stability we have attained, and have arrived unto; and to prevent any temptation to a revolt, let us often possess our minds with thoughts of the immutability of God's nature and will, which like fire under water, will keep a good matter boiling up in us, and make it both retain and increase its heat.

4. Let this doctrine teach us to have *recourse to God, and aim at a near conjunction with him.* When our spirits begin to flag, and a cold aguish temper is drawing upon us; let us go to him, who only can fix our hearts, and furnish us with ballast to render them steadfast. As he only is immutable in his nature, so he is the only principle of immutability as well as being in the creature. Without his grace, we shall soon *fall from our steadfastness.* When Peter trusted in himself, he changed to the worse: it was his master's recourse to God for him that preserved in him a reducing principle, which changed him again for the better, and fixed him in it, *Luke 22. 32.*

It will be our interest to be in conjunction with him, that moves not about with the heavens, nor is turned by the force of nature, nor changed by the accidents of the world; but sits in the heavens, moving all things by his powerful arm, according to his infinite skill. While we have him for our God, we have his immutability as well as every other perfection of his nature for our advantage; the nearer we come to him, the more stability we shall have in ourselves; the further from him, the more liable to change. The line that is nearest to the place where it is first fixed, is least subject to motion; the further it is stretched from it, the weaker it is, and more liable to be shaken. Let us also affect those things which are nearest to him in this perfection; the righteousness of Christ that shall never wear out, and the graces of the Spirit that shall never burn out; by this means what God is infinitely by nature, we shall come to be finitely immutable by grace, as much as the capacity of a creature can contain.

THE

OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

Jeremiah 23. 24.

CAN ANY HIDE HIMSELF IN SECRET PLACES, THAT I SHALL NOT SEE HIM, SAITH THE LORD? DO NOT I FILL HEAVEN AND EARTH, SAITH THE LORD?

PART I.

GOD IS ESSENTIALLY PRESENT EVERY WHERE.

The occasion and sense of the text—Explication of the doctrine—Various notions entertained—The subject negatively understood—An influential omnipresence—In what sense limited to its subjects—God essentially present—In all places—With all creatures—Without mixture—Without division—Not by multiplication—Extension or diversion—Present beyond the world—Omnipresence not the attribute of any creature.

THE occasion of this discourse, begins verse 16, where God admonisheth the people, not to hearken to the words of the false prophets, which spake a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They made the people vain by their insinuations of peace, when God had proclaimed war and calamity; and uttered the

dreams of their fancies, and not the visions of the Lord; and so turned the people from the expectation of the evil day which God had threatened, ver. 17, *They say still unto them that despise me, the Lord hath said, ye shall have peace: and they say unto every one that walks after the imagination of his own heart, no evil shall come upon you.* And they invalidate the prophesies of those, whom God had sent, ver. 18, *Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? Who hath marked his word, and heard it? Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord?* Are they acquainted with the secrets of God more than we? Who have the word of the Lord, if we have not?

Or, it may be a continuation of God's admonition: believe not those prophets; for who of them have been acquainted with the secrets of God? or by what means should they learn his counsel? No, assure yourselves, *a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind, it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked,* ver. 19. A whirlwind shall come from Babylon, it is just at the door, and shall not be blown over, it shall fall with a witness upon the wicked people, and the deceiving prophets, and sweep them together into captivity, For, ver. 20, *The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he he have performed the thoughts of his heart.* My fury shall not be a childish fury that quickly languisheth, but shall accomplish whatsoever I threaten; and burn till I have satisfied my vengeance; *in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly,* ver. 20. when the storm shall beat upon you, you shall then know, that the calamities shall answer the words you have heard. When the conqueror shall waste your grounds, demolish your houses, and manacle your hands, then shall you consider it, and have the wishes of fools, that you had had your eyes in your heads before; you shall then know the falseness of your guides, and the truth of my prophets, and discern who stood in the counsel of the Lord, and subscribe to the messages I have sent you.

Some understand this, not only of the Babylonish captivity, but refer it to the time of Christ, and the false

doctrine of men's own righteousness in opposition to the righteousness of God; understanding this verse, to be partly a threatening of wrath, which shall end in advantage to the Jews, who shall in the latter time consider the falseness of their notions about a legal righteousness, and so make it a promise; they shall then know the intent of the Scripture, and in the latter days, the latter end of the world, when time shall be near the rolling up, they shall reflect upon themselves; they shall *look upon him whom they have pierced*; and till these *latter days*, they shall be hardened, and believe nothing of evangelical truths.

Now God denies that he sent those prophets, ver. 21, *I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.* They have intruded themselves without a commission from me, whatsoever their boastings are. The reason to prove it is, ver. 22, *If they had stood in my counsel*, if they had been instructed, and inspired by me, *they would have caused my people to hear my words;* they would have regulated themselves according to my word, *and have turned them from their evil way;* i. e. endeavoured to shake down their false confidences of peace, and make them sensible of their false notions of me and my ways. Now because those false prophets could not be so impudent as to boast, that they prophesied in the name of God, when they had no commission from him, unless they had some secret sentiment that they and their intentions were hid from the knowledge and eye of God, he adds, verse 23, *Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him?* Have I not the power of seeing and knowing what they do, what they design, what they think? Why should I not have such a power, since *I fill heaven and earth* by my essence? *Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off?* He excludes here the doctrine of those that excluded the providence of God from extending itself to the inferior things of the earth; which error was ancient, as ancient as the time of Job, as appears by their opinion, that God's eyes were blinded by the thickness of the clouds, and could not

pierce through their dark and dense body; *Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, Job* 22. 14.

* Some refer it to *time.*—Do you imagine me a God new framed like your idols, beginning a little time ago, and not existing before the foundation of the world; yea, from eternity? *a God afar off*, further than your acutest understandings can reach? I am of longer standing, and you ought to know my majesty.—But it rather refers to *place*, than time. Do you think I do not behold every thing in the earth, as well as in heaven? Am I shut up within the walls of my palace, and cannot look out to behold the things that are done in the world? Or that I am so linked to pleasure in the place of my glory, as earthly kings are in their courts, that I have no mind, or leisure to take notice of the carriages of men upon earth? God doth not say, he was afar off, but only gives an account of the inward thoughts of their minds, or at least, of the language expressed by their actions.

The interrogation carries in it a strong affirmation, and assures us more of God's care, and the folly of men in not considering it. *Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places.* Heb. in hiddenesses, in the deepest cells. What? are you so besotted by your base lusts, that you think me a God careless, ignorant, blind, that I can see nothing, but as a purblind man, what is very near my eye? Are you so out of your wits, that you imagine you can deceive me? Do not all your behaviours speak such a sentiment in your heart, though not yet testified by your actions? No, you are much mistaken, it is impossible but that I should see and know all things, since I am present with all things, and am not at a greater distance from the things on earth, than from the things in heaven; for I fill all that vast fabric which is divided into those two parts of heaven and earth; and he that hath such an infinite essence, cannot be distant, cannot be ignorant, nothing can be far from his eyes, since every thing is so near to his essence.

* Munster, Vatablus, Castalio Oecolamp.

So that it is an elegant expression of the omniscience of God, and a strong argument for it. He asserts, first the universality of his knowledge; but lest they should mistake, and confine his presence only to heaven, he adds, that he *fills heaven and earth.* I do not see things so, as if I were in one place, and the things seen in another, as it is with man; but whatsoever I see, I see not without myself, because every corner of heaven and earth is filled by me. He that fills all, must needs see and know all. And indeed, men that question the knowledge of God, would be more convinced by the doctrine of his immediate presence with them. And this seems to be the design and manner of arguing in this place. Nothing is remote from my knowledge, because nothing is distant from my presence.

I fill heaven and earth. He doth not say, I am in heaven and earth, but I *fill* heaven and earth, i. e. * say some, with my knowledge; others, with my authority, or my power. But,

1. The word *filling* cannot properly be referred to the act of *understanding* and will. A presence by knowledge is to be granted, but to say such a presence fills a place, is improper. Knowledge is not enough to constitute a presence. A man at London knows there is such a city as Paris, and knows many things in it; can he be concluded therefore to be present in Paris, or fill any place there, or be present with the things he knows there? If I know any thing to be distant from me, how can it be present with me? For by knowing it to be distant, I know it not to be present. Besides, *filling* heaven and earth, is distinguished here from knowing or seeing. His presence is rendered as an argument to prove his knowledge. Now a proposition, and the proof of that proposition, are distinct, and not the same. It cannot be imagined that God should prove *idem per idem,* as we say; for what would be the import of the speech then? I know all things, I see all things, because

* Tum perspicacia, tum efficacia, Grot.

I know and see all things.* The Holy Ghost here accommodates himself to the capacity of men; because we know that a man sees and knows that which is done, where he is corporally present; so he proves, that God knows all things that are done in the most secret caverns of the hearts, because he is every where in heaven and earth, as light is every where in the air, and air every where in the world. Hence the schools use the term *repletive* for the presence of God.

2. Nor by *filling* of heaven and earth, is meant his *authority* and *power*. It would be improperly said of a king, that in regard of the government of his kingdom, he is every where by his authority, that he fills all the cities and countries of his dominions. *I, do not I fill?*† That *I* notes the essence of God, as distinguished according to our capacity, from the perfections pertaining to his essence; and is in reason better referred to the substance of God, than to those things we conceive as attributes in him. Besides, were it meant only of his authority or power, the argument would not run well. I see all things, because my authority and power fills heaven and earth. Power doth not always rightly infer knowledge, no not in a rational agent. Many things in a kingdom are done by the authority of the king, that never arrive to the knowledge of the king. Many things in us are done by the power of our souls, which yet we have not a distinct knowledge of in our understandings. There are many motions in sleep by the virtue of the soul informing the body, that we have not so much as a simple knowledge of in our minds. Knowledge is not rightly inferred from power, or power from knowledge.

By *filling* heaven and earth is meant therefore, a filling it with his *essence*. No place can be imagined, that is deprived of the presence of God; and therefore when the scriptures any where speak of the presence of God, they join heaven and earth together. He so fills them, that there is no place without him. We do not say

* Suarez. † Amyrald. de Trinitate. p. 57.

a vessel is full, so long as there is any space to contain more. Not a part of heaven, nor a part of earth, but the whole heaven, the whole earth, at one and the same time. If he were only in one part of heaven, or one part of earth; nay, if there were any part of heaven, or any part of earth void of him, he could not be said to fill them. I fill heaven and earth; not a part of me fills one place, and another part of me fills another; but I am whole God, filling the heaven; and whole God, filling the earth. I fill heaven, and yet fill earth; I fill earth, and yet fill heaven, and fill heaven and earth at one and the same time. God fills his own works, says a heathen philosopher. *

Here is then a description of God's presence. 1. By power, *Am I not a God afar off?* 2. By knowledge; *Shall I not see them?* 3. By essence; as an undeniable ground for inferring the two former: I fill heaven and earth.

Doct. God is essentially every where present in heaven and earth. If God be, he must be somewhere; that which is no where, is nothing. Since God is, he is in the world; not in one part of it; for then he were circumscribed by it: if in the world, and only there, though it be a great space, he were also limited. † Some therefore said, God was every where, and no where. No where, i. e. not bounded by any place, nor receiving from any place any thing for his preservation or sustainment. He is every where, because no creature either body or spirit, can exclude the presence of his essence; for he is not only near, but in every thing; *In him we live, and move, and have our being*, *Acts* 17. 28. Not absent from any thing, but so present with them, that they live and move in him, and move more in God, than in the air or earth wherein they are; nearer to us than our flesh to our bones, than the air to our breath; he cannot be far from them that live, and have every motion in him. The apostle doth not say, *by him*, but *in him*, to shew the inwardness of his presence.

* Seneca de Benefic. lib. 4. cap. 8. Ipse opus suum implet.
† Chrysostom.

As eternity is the perfection whereby he hath neither beginning nor end; immutability is the perfection whereby he hath neither increase, nor diminution: so immensity or omnipresence is that whereby he hath neither bounds nor limitation. As he is in all time, yet so as to be above time; so is he in all places, yet so as to be above limitation by any place. It was a good expression of a heathen to illustrate this, that God is a sphere or circle, whose centre is every where, and circumference no where. His meaning was, that the essence of God was indivisible; i. e. could not be divided. It cannot be said, here and there the lines of it terminate; it is like a line drawn out in infinite spaces, that no point can be conceived where its length and breadth ends. The sea is a vast mass of waters; yet to that it is said, *hitherto shalt thou go, and no further*. But it cannot be said of God's essence, hitherto it reaches and no further; here it is, and there it is not. It is plain, that God is thus immense, because he is infinite; we have reason and scripture to assent to it, though we cannot conceive it. We know that God is eternal, though eternity is too great to be measured by the short line of a created understanding. We cannot conceive the vastness and glory of the heavens, much less that which is so great, as to *fill* heaven and earth; yea, *not to be contained in the heaven of heavens*, 1 *Kings* 8. 27.

Things are said to be present, or in a place. 1. *Circumscriptive*, as circumscribed. This belongs to things that have quantity, as bodies that are encompassed by that place wherein they are; and a body fills but one particular space wherein it is, and the space is commensurate to every part of it, and every member hath a distinct place. The hand is not in the same particular space, that the foot or head is. 2. *Definitive*, which belongs to angels and spirits, which are said to be in a point, yet so as that they cannot be said to be in another at the same time. 3. *Repletive*, filling all places; this belongs only to God; as he is not measured by time, so he is not limited by place. A body or spirit, because finite, fills but one space; God, because infinite, fills all,

yet so as not to be contained in them, as water is in a vessel. He is from the height of the heaven, to the bottom of the deeps in every point of the world, and in the whole circle of it, yet not limited by it, but beyond it. And this hath been acknowledged by the wisest men in the world.

Some indeed had other notions of God. The more ignorant of the Jews confined him to the temple.* And God intimates, that they had such a thought when he asserts his presence in heaven and earth, in opposition to the temple they built as his house, and *the place* of his *rest*,† And the idolaters among them, thought their gods might be at a distance from them, which Elias intimates in the scoff he puts upon them, 1 *Kings* 18. 17, *Cry aloud, for he is a God,* meaning Baal; *either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey;* and they follow his advice, and cried *louder*, ver. 28. Whereby it is evident, they looked not on it as mockery, but as truth. And the Syrians called the God of Israel, 1 *Kings* 20. 23, the God of the hills, as though his presence were fixed there, and not in the valleys; and their own gods in the valleys, and not in the mountains; they fancied every God to have a particular dominion, and presence in one place, and not in another; and bounded the territories of their gods, as they did those of their princes. ‡ And some thought him tied to, and shut up in their temples and groves wherein they worshipped him. § Some of them thought God to be confined to heaven, and therefore sacrificed upon the highest mountains, that the steam might ascend nearer heaven, and their praises be heard better in those places which were nearest to the habitation of God. But the wiser Jews acknowledged it; and therefore called God *place*, ‖ whereby they denoted his immensity; he was not contained in any place, every part of the world subsists by him: he

* Hierom. on Isa. 66. 1. † Hammond on Matth. 6. 7.

‡ Med. Diatrib. vol. 1. p. 71, 72. § Dought Analec excurs. 61. 113.

‖ מקום Grot. upon Mar. 5. 16. Mares. contra Volk. lib. 1. cap. 27. p. 494.

was a place to himself, greater than any thing made by him. And the wiser heathens acknowledged it also.

* One calls God a mind passing through the universal nature of things; another, that he was an infinite and immense air; † another, that it is as natural to think God is every where, as to think that God is: hence they called God the soul of the world, that as the soul is in every part of the body, to quicken it, so is God in every part of the world, to support it. And there are some resemblances of this in the world, though no creature can fully resemble God in any one perfection: for then it would not be a creature, but God. But air and light are some weak resemblances of it. Air is in all the spaces of the world, in the pores of all bodies, in the bowels of the earth, and extends itself from the lowest earth to the highest regions; and the heavens themselves are probably nothing else but a refined kind of air; and light diffuseth itself through the whole air, and every part of it is truly light, as every part of the air is truly air; and though they seem to be mingled together, yet they are distinct things, and not of the same essence; so is the essence of God in the whole world, not by diffusion, as air or light; not mixed with any creature; but remaining distinct from the essence of any created being. Now when this hath been owned by men instructed only in the school of nature, it is a greater shame to any acquainted with the scripture to deny it. For the understanding of this, there shall be some propositions premised in general.

1. This is *negatively* to be understood. Our knowledge of God is most by withdrawing from him, or denying to him, in our conception, any weaknesses or imperfections in the creature. As the infinity of God is a denial of limitation of being, so immensity or omnipresence is a denial of limitation of place: and when we say, God is *totus* in every place, we must understand it thus, that he is not every where by parts, as bodies are, as air and light are; he is every where, i. e. his

* Vide Minut. Fel. p. 20. † Plotin Enead 6. lib. 5. cap. 4.

nature hath no bounds, he is not tied to any place, as the creature is, who when he is present in one place, is absent from another. As no place can be without God, so no place can compass and contain him.

2. There is an *influential* omnipresence of God, which is universal *with all creatures.* He is present with all things by his authority, because all things are subject to him: by his power, because all things are sustained by him, by his knowledge, because all things are naked before him. He is present in the world, as a king is in all parts of his kingdom regally present: providentially present with all, since his care extends to the meanest of his creatures. His power reacheth all, and his knowledge pierceth all. As every thing in the world was created by God, so every thing in the world is preserved by him; and since preservation is not wholly distinct from creation, it is necessary God should be present with every thing while he preserves it, as well as present with it when he created it; *Thou preservest man and beast, Psal.* 36. 6. *He upholds all things by the word of his power, Heb.* 1. 3. There is a virtue sustaining every creature, that it may not fall back into that nothing from whence it was elevated by the power of God. All those natural virtues we call the principles of operation, are fountains springing from his goodness and power; all things are moved and managed by him, as well as preserved by him; and in this sense God is present with all creatures; for whatsoever acts another, is present with that which it acts, by sending forth some virtue and influence, whereby it acts: if free agents do not only *live,* but *move in him and by him,* much more are the motions of other natural agents, by a virtue communicated to them, and upheld in them in the time of their acting: this virtual presence of God, is evident to our sense, a presence we feel; his essential presence is evident in our reason.

This influential presence may be compared to that of the sun, which though at so great a distance from the earth, is present in the air and earth by its light, and within the earth by its influence in concocting those

metals which are in the bowels of it, without being substantially either of them. God is thus so intimate with every creature, that there is not the least particle of any creature, but the marks of his power and goodness are seen in it, and his goodness doth attend them, and is more swift in its effluxes, than the breaking out of light from the sun, which yet are more swift than can be declared; but to say he is in the world only by his virtue, is to acknowledge only the effects of his power and wisdom in the world, that his eye sees all, his arm supports all, his goodness nourisheth all, but himself and his essence are at a distance from them? * and so the soul of man according to its measure would have in some kind a more excellent manner of presence in the body, than God according to the infiniteness of his being with his creatures; for that doth not only communicate life to the body, but is actually present with it, and spreads its whole essence through the body and every member of it: all grant, that God is efficaciously in every creek of the world; but some say he is only substantially in heaven.

But further, the influential omnipresence of God is *limited to such subjects that are capacitated for this or that kind of presence.* Yet it is an omnipresence, because it is a presence in all the subjects capacitated for it; thus there is a special providential presence of God with some, in assisting them when he sets them on some special service in the world: as with Cyrus, *Isa.* 45. 2, *I will go before thee;* and with Nebuchadnezzar, and Alexander, whom he protected and directed to execute his counsels in the world; such a presence Judas and others had in working miracles, that shall not enjoy his glorious presence. Besides † as there is an *effective* presence of God with all creatures, because he produced them and preserves them; so there is an *objective* presence of God with rational creatures, because he offers himself to them, to be known and loved by them: he is near to wicked men in the offers of his grace, *Isa.* 55. 6, *Call*

* Zanch. † Cajetan in Aquin, Par. 1. Qu. 8. Artic. 3.

ye upon him while he is near; besides, there is a *gracious* presence of God with his people in whom he dwells, and makes his abode as in a *temple* consecrated to him by the graces of the spirit. *We will come, John* 14. 23, i. e. the Father and the Son, *and make our abode with him.* He is present with all by the presence of his divinity, but only in his saints by a presence of a gracious efficacy; he walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and hath dignified the congregation of his people with the title of *Jehovah Shammah, The Lord is there: In* Salem *is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in* Sion. *Ezek.* 48. 35. *Psal.* 76. 2.

As he filled the tabernacle, so he doth the church with the signs of his presence; this is not the presence wherewith he fills heaven and earth.

His spirit is not bestowed upon all, to reside in their hearts, enlighten their minds, and bedew them with refreshing comforts: when the apostle speaks of God's being *above all,* and *through all; above all* in his majesty, *through all* in his providence; he doth not appropriate that, as he doth what follows, *and in you all;* in you all by a special grace; as God was specially present with Christ by the grace of union, so he is specially present with his people by the grace of regeneration, *Ephes.* 4. 6. So there are several manifestations of his presence; he hath a presence of glory in heaven, whereby he comforts the saints; a presence of wrath in hell, whereby he torments the damned; in heaven he is a God spreading his beams of light; in hell, a God distributing his strokes of justice; by the one he fills heaven, by the other he fills hell; by his providence and essence he fills both heaven and earth.

3. There is an *essential* presence of God in the world. He is not only every where, by his power upholding the creatures, by his wisdom understanding them, but by his essence containing them. That any thing is essentially present any where, it hath from God; God is therefore much more present every where, for he cannot give that which he hath not.

He is essentially present in *all places.* * It is as reasonable to think the essence of God to be every where, as to be always; immensity is as rational as eternity; that indivisible essence which reaches through all times, may as well reach through all places. It is more excellent to be always, than to be every where; for to be always in duration is intrinsical; to be every where is extrinsic; if the greater belongs to God, why not the less? As all times are a moment to his eternity, so all places are as a point to his essence; as he is larger than all time, so he is vaster than all place: the nations of the world are to him *as the dust of the balance, or drop of a bucket. The nations are accounted as the small dust, Isa.* 40. 15. The essence of God may well be thought to be present every where with that which is no more than a grain of dust to him, and in all those *isles*, which if put together, *are a very little thing* in his hand: therefore saith a learned Jew,† if a man were set in the highest heavens, he would not be nearer to the essence of God than if he were in the centre of the earth. Why may not the presence of God in the world be as noble as that of the soul in the body, which is generally granted to be essentially in every part of the body of man: which is but a little world, and animates every member by its actual presence, though it exerts not the same operation in every part? ‡ The world is less to the Creator, than the body to the soul; and needs more the presence of God, than the body needs the presence of the soul.

That glorious body the sun, visits every part of the habitable earth in twenty-four hours by its beams; which reaches the depths of the lowest valleys, as well as the pinnacles of the highest mountains; must we not acknowledge in the Creator of this sun an infinitely greater proportion of presence? Is it not as easy with the essence of God to over-spread the whole body of heaven and earth, as it is for the sun to pierce and diffuse itself through the whole air between it and the earth, and send

* Ficin. † Maimonid. ‡ Ficin.

up its light also as far to the regions above? Do we not see something like it in sounds and voices? Is not the same sound of a trumpet, or any other musical instrument, at the first breaking out of a blast, in several places within such a compass, at the same time? Doth not every ear that hears it receive alike the whole sound of it? And fragrant odours scented in several places at the same time, in the same manner; and the organ proper for smelling takes in the same in every person within the compass of it: how far is the noise of thunder heard alike to every ear, in places something distant from one another? and do we daily find such a manner of presence in those things of so low a concern, and not imagine a kind of presence of God greater than all those? Is the sound of thunder, the *voice of God,* every where in such a compass, and shall not the essence of an infinite God be much more every where?

Those that would confine the essence of God only to heaven, and exclude it from the earth, run into great inconveniencies. It may be demanded, whether he be in one part of the heavens, or in the whole vast body of them? If in one part of them, his essence is bounded; if he moves from that part, he is mutable, for he changes the place where he was, for another where he was not. If he be always fixed in one part of the heavens, such a notion would render him little better than a living statue:* If he be in the whole heaven, why cannot his essence possess a greater space than the whole heavens which are so vast? How comes he to be confined within the compass of that, since the whole heaven compasseth the earth? If he be in the whole heaven, he is in places farther distant one from another than any part of the earth can be from the heavens; since the earth is like a centre in the midst of a circle, it must be nearer to every part of the circle, than some parts of the circle can be to one another. If therefore his essence possesses the whole heavens, no reason can be rendered why he doth not also

* Hornheck Sonn. Part 1. p. 303.

possess the earth, since also the earth is but a little point in comparison of the vastness of the heavens.

This scripture is plain, *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I fly from thy presence? If I ascend up to heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall uphold me, Psal.* 139. 7, 8, 9. If he be in heaven, earth, hell, sea, he fills all places with his presence; his presence is here asserted in places the most distant from one another; all the places then between heaven and earth are possessed by his presence. It is not meant of his knowledge, for that the psalmist had spoken of before, ver. 2. 3, *Thou understandest my thoughts afar off, thou art acquainted with all my ways.* Besides, *Thou art there*, not thy wisdom or knowledge; but *thou*, thy essence, not only thy virtue. For having before spoken of his omniscience, he proves that such knowledge could not be in God, unless he were present in his essence in all places, so as to be excluded from none: he fills the depths of hell, the extension of the earth, and the heights of the heavens.

When the scripture mentions the power of God only, it expresseth it by *hand* or *arm;* but when it mentions the Spirit of God, and doth not intend the third person in the Trinity, it signifies the nature and essence of God; and so here, when he saith, *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?* He adds exegetically, *Whither shall I fly from thy presence*, or Heb. *face?* and the face of God in scripture signifies the essence of God, *Exod.* 33. 20. 23, *Thou canst not see my face*, and *my face shall not be seen;* the effects of his power, wisdom, providence are seen, which are his back-parts, but not his face. The effects of his power and wisdom are seen in the world, but his essence is invisible; and this the psalmist elegantly expresseth. Had I wings endued with as much quickness as the first dawnings of the morning light, or the first darts of any sun-beam that spreads itself through the hemisphere, and passes many miles in as short a space as I can think a thought, I

should find thy presence in all places before me, and could not fly out of the infinite compass of thy essence?

He is essentially present *with all creatures.* If he be in all places, it follows that he is with all creatures in those places; as he is in heaven, so he is with all angels; as he is in hell, so he is with all devils; as he is in the earth and sea, so he is with all creatures inhabiting those elements. As his essential presence was the ground of the first being of things by creation, so it is the ground of the continued being of things by conservation. As his essential presence was the original, so it is the support of the existence of all the creatures. What are all those magnificent expressions of his creative virtue, but testimonies of his essential presence at the laying the foundation of the world? *Isa.* 40. 12, *When he measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.* He sets forth the power and majesty of God in the creation and preservation of things, and every expression testifies his presence with them. The waters that were upon the face of the earth at first, were no more than a drop in the palm of a man's hand, which in every part is touched by his hand. And thus he is equally present with the degraded devils, as well as the most exalted angels; with the lowest dust as well as with the brightest sun. He is equally present with the damned and the blessed, as he is an infinite Being, but not in regard of his goodness and grace.

He is equally present with the good and the bad, with the scoffing Athenians as well as the believing apostles, in regard of his essence, but not of the breathing of his divine virtues upon them to make them like himself. *He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being: Acts* 17. 7. The apostle includes all; he tells them they should seek the Lord; the Lord that they were to seek, is God essentially considered. We are indeed to seek the perfections of God, that glitter in his works, but to the end that they should direct us to the seeking of God himself in his own nature and

essence: * and therefore what follows, *In him we live,* is to be understood, not of his power and goodness, perfections of his nature, distinguished according to our manner of conception, from his essence; but of the essential presence of God with his creatures. If he had meant it of his efficacy in preserving us, it had not been any proof of his nearness to us. Who would go about to prove the body, or substance of the sun to be near us, because it warms and enlightens us, when our sense evidences the distance of it? We live in the beams of the sun, but we cannot be said to live in the sun, which is so far distant from us.

The expression seems to be more emphatical than to intend any less than his essential presence: but we live in him not only as the efficient cause of our life, but as the foundation, sustaining our lives and motions, as if he were like air, diffused round about us. And we move in him, as Austin saith, as a sponge in the sea, not containing him, but being contained by him: he compasseth all, is encompassed by none; he fills all, is comprehended by none. The Creator contains the world, the world contains not the Creator: as the hollow of the hand contains the water, the water in the hollow of the hand contains not the hand; and therefore some have chose to say rather, that the world is in God, it lives and moves in him, than that God is in the world: if all things thus live and move in him, then he is present with every thing that hath life and motion.

But now this essential presence is, without any *mixture.* I fill heaven and earth, not, I am mixed with heaven and earth; his essence is not mixed with the creatures; it remains entire in itself. The sponge retains the nature of a sponge, though encompassed by the sea, and moving in it; and the sea still retains its own nature. God is most simple; his essence therefore is not mixed with any thing. The light of the sun is present with the air, but not mixed with it, it remains light, and the air remains air; the light of the sun is diffused through all the

* Amyrald de Trinit.

hemisphere, it pierceth all transparent bodies, it seems to mix itself with all things, yet remains unmixed and undivided; the light remains light, and the air remains air; the air is not light though it be enlightened. Or, take this similitude: when many candles are lighted up in a room, the light is altogether, yet not mixed with one another; every candle hath a particular light belonging to it, which may be be separated in a moment, by removing one candle from another; but if they were mixed, they could not be separated, at least so easily. God is not formally one with the world, or with any creature in the world, by his presence in it; nor can any creature in the world, no, not the soul of man, or an angel, come to be essentially one with God, though God be essentially present with it.

The essential presence of God is without any *division* of himself. *I fill heaven and earth*, not part in heaven and part in earth; I fill one as well as the other. One part of his essence is not in one place, and another part of his essence in another place, he would then be changeable; for that part of his essence which were now in this place, he might alter it to another, and place that part of his essence which were in another place, to this; but he is undivided every where. As his eternity is one indivisible point, though in our conception we divide it into past, present, and to come: so the whole world is as a point to him in regard of place, as was said before, it is as a small dust, and grain of dust. It is impossible that one part of his essence can be separated from another, for he is not a body, to have one part separable from another. The light of the sun cannot be separated into parts, it cannot be shut up in any place and kept there, it is intire in every place; and shall not God, who gives the light that power, be much more present himself? Whatsoever hath parts is finitè, but God is infinite, therefore he hath no parts in his essence. Besides, if there were such a division of his being, he would not be the most simple and uncompounded being, but would be made up of various parts; he would not be a spirit, for parts are evidences of composition; and it could not be

said that God is here, or there, but only a part of God is here, and a part there. But *he fills heaven and earth*, he is as much a God in the *earth beneath as in heaven above;* entirely in all places, not by fragments of his essence.

The essential presence of God is not by *multiplication.* For that which is infinite cannot multiply itself, or make itself more or greater than it was. Neither is this essential presence by *extension or diffusion;* as a piece of gold may be beaten out to cover a large compass of ground; no, if God should create millions of worlds he would be in them all, not by the stretching out or growth of his being, but by the infinity of his being; and the same essence he had from eternity.

But, finally. There is *no space* wherein God is not wholly according to his essence, and wherein his whole substance does not exist; not a part of heaven can be designed wherein the Creator is not wholly; as he is in one part of heaven, he is in every part of heaven. Some kind of resemblance we may have from the water of the sea, which fills the great space of the world, and is diffused through all; yet the essence of water is in every drop of water in the sea, as much as the whole; and the same quality of water, though it comes short in quantity; and why shall we not allow God a nobler way of presence without diffusion, as is in that? Or take this resemblance, since God likens himself to light in the scripture, *Psa.* 104. 2, *He covereth himself with light;* 1 *John* 1. 5, *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* A chrystal globe hung up in the air has light all about it, all within it, every part is pierced by it, wherever you see the chrystal you see the light; the light in one part of the chrystal cannot be distinguished from the light in the other part; and the whole essence of light is in every part; and shall not God be as much present with his creatures, as one creature can be with another? * God is totally every where by his own simple substance.

Proposition 4. God is present *beyond the world.* He is within and above all places, though places should be infinite in number; as he was before and beyond all time,

* Bernard.

so he is above and beyond all place; being from eternity before any real time, he must also be without as well as within any real space. If God were only confined to the world, he would be no more infinite in his essence than the world is in quantity; as a moment cannot be conceived from eternity, wherein God was not in being, so a space cannot be conceived in the mind of man, wherein God is not present; he is not contained in the world nor in the heavens. *But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee,* 1 *Kings* 8. 27. Solomon wonders that God should appoint a temple to be erected to him upon the earth, when he is not contained in the vast circuit of the heavens; his essence is not straitened in the limits of any created work, he is not contained in the heavens, i. e. in the manner that he is there; but he is there in his essence, and therefore cannot be contained there in his essence.

If it should be meant only of his power and providence, it would conclude also for his essence; if his power and providence were infinite, his essence must be so too: for the infinity of his essence is the ground of the infinity of his power. It can never enter into any thought, that a finite essence can have an infinite power, and that an infinite power can be without an infinite essence; it cannot be meant of his providence, as if Solomon should say, *the heaven of heavens cannot contain thy providence;* for naming the heaven of heavens, that which encircles and bounds the other parts of the world, he could not suppose a providence to be exercised where there was no object to exercise it about; as no creature is mentioned to be beyond the uttermost heaven, which he calls here *the heaven of heavens:* besides, to understand it of his providence, doth not consist with Solomon's admiration: he wonders that God, that hath so immense an essence, should dwell in a temple made with hands; he could not so much wonder at his providence in those things that immediately concern his worship.

Solomon plainly asserts this of God, that he was so far from being bounded within the rich wall of the

temple, which with so much cost he had framed for the glory of his name, that the richer palace of the heaven of heavens could not contain him; it is true, it could not contain his power and wisdom, because his wisdom could contrive other kind of worlds, and his power erect them: but does his meaning reach no farther than this? Will the power and wisdom of God reside on the earth? He was too wise to ask such a question, since every object that his eyes met with in the world resolved him, that the wisdom and power of God dwelt upon the earth, and glittered in every thing he had created; and reason would assure him, that the power that had framed this world, was able to frame many more: but Solomon considering the immensity of God's essence, wonders that God should order a house to be built for him, as if he wanted habitations as earthly creatures do. Will God indeed dwell in a temple, who hath an essence so immense as not to be contained in the heaven of heavens? It is not the heaven of heavens that can contain him. Here he asserts the immensity of his essence, and his presence not only in the heaven, but beyond the heavens; he is not contained in the heavens, as a man is in a chamber; no, he is without, and above, and beyond the heavens; it is not said they do not contain him, but that it is impossible they should, they *cannot contain him.*

It is impossible then but that he should be above them; he that is without the compass of the world, is not bounded by the limits of the world; as his power is not limited by the things he hath made, but can create innumerable worlds, so can his essence be in innumerable spaces; for as he hath power enough to make more worlds, so he hath essence enough to fill them, and therefore cannot be confined to what he hath already created; innumerable worlds cannot be a sufficient place to contain God, he can only be a sufficient place to himself;* he that was before the world and place, and all things, was to himself a world, a place, and every thing:† He is really out of the world in himself, as he was in

* Petar. † Maccor. loc. commun, cap. 19. p. 153.

himself before the creation of the world: as because God was before the foundation of the world, we conclude his eternity; so because he is without the bounds of the world, we conclude his immensity, and from thence his omnipresence. The world cannot be said to contain him, since it was created by him; it cannot contain him now, who was contained by nothing before the world was: as there was no place to contain him before the world was, there can be no place to contain him since the world was.

God might create more worlds circular and round as this, and those could not be so contiguous, but some spaces would be left between; as, take three round balls, lay them as close as you can to one another, there will be some spaces between; none would say but God would be in these spaces, as well as in the world he had created, though there were nothing real and positive in those spaces: why should we then exclude God from those imaginary spaces without the world? God might also create many worlds, and separate them by distances, that they might not touch one another, but be at a great distance from one another; and would not God fill them as well as he doth this? if so, he must also fill the spaces between them: for if he were in all those worlds, and not in the spaces between those worlds, his essence would be divided; there would be gaps in it, his essence would be cut into parts, and the distance between every part of his essence would be as great as the space between each world: the essence of God may be conceived then well enough to be in all those infinite spaces where he can erect new worlds.

I shall give one place more to prove both these propositions, viz. That God is essentially in every part of the world, and essentially above ours without the world. *The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool, Isa. 66.* 1. he is essentially in every part of the world; he is in heaven and earth at the same time; as a man is upon his throne and his footstool. God describes himself in a human shape, accommodated to our capacity; as if he had his head in heaven and his feet on earth;

doth not his essence then fill all intermediate spaces between heaven and earth? As when the head of a man is in the upper part of a room, and his feet upon the floor, his body fills up the space between the head and his feet; this is meant of the essence of God, it is a similitude drawn from kings sitting upon the throne, and not their power and authority, but the feet of their persons are supported by the footstool; so here it is not meant only of the perfections of God, but the essence of God: besides, God seems to tax them with an erroneous conceit they had, as though his essence were in the temple, and not in any part of the world; therefore God makes an opposition between heaven and earth, and the temple; *Where is the house that you built unto me? and where is the place of my rest?* Had he understood it only of his providence, it had not been any thing against their mistake; for they granted his providence to be not only in the temple, but in all parts of the world? *Where is the house that you build unto me; unto me,* not to my power or providence, but think to include *me* within those walls.

Again, it shews God to be above the heavens, if the heavens be his throne; he sits upon them, and is above them as kings are above the thrones on which they sit; so it cannot be meant of his providence, because no creature being without the sphere of the heavens, there is nothing of the power and the providence of God visible there; for there is nothing for him to employ his providence about. For providence supposeth a creature in actual being; it must be therefore meant of his essence, which is above the world, and in the world. And the like proof you may see, *Job* 11. 7, 8, *It is as high as the heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.* Where he intends the unsearchableness of God's wisdom, but proves it by the infinity of his esssence, *Heb. He is the height of the heavens,* he is the top of all the heavens; so that when you have begun at the lowest part, and traced him through all the creatures, you will find his essence

filling all the creatures to be at the top of the world, and infinitely beyond it.

5. Fifth proposition. This is the property of God, *incommunicable to any creature.* As no creature can be eternal and immutable, so no creature can be immense, because it cannot be infinite; nothing can be of an infinite nature, and therefore nothing of an immense presence but God: it cannot be communicated to the human nature of Christ, though in union with the divine.* Some indeed argue, that Christ in regard of his human nature is every where, because he sits at the right hand of God; and the right hand of God is every where. His sitting at the right hand of God, signifies his exaltation, and cannot with any reason be extended to such a kind of arguing; *The hearts of kings are in the hand of God;* are the hearts of kings every where, because God's hand is every where? The souls therefore of the righteous are in the hand of God, the souls of all the righteous are every where in the world. The right hand of God is from eternity, is the humanity of Christ therefore from eternity, because it sits at the right hand of God? The right hand of God made the world, did the humanity of Christ therefore make heaven and earth? The humanity of Christ must then be confounded with his divinity; be the same with it, not united to it. All creatures are distinct from their Creator, and cannot inherit the properties essential to his nature, as eternity, immensity, immutability, omnipresence, omniscience; no angel, no soul, no creature can be in all places at once; before they can be so, they must be immense, and so must cease to be creatures, and become God.

* Rivet. 110 Psal. p. 301. Col. 2.

PART II.

PROOF OF THE DIVINE OMNIPRESENCE.

God omnipresent because infinite—In his perfections—In his essence—Hath an infinite presence—His continued operation in the world—His supreme perfection---His immutability---Omnipotence---Further elucidation of the subject---Some expressions of scripture considered---The presence of God with all creatures no disparagement to him---From this doctrine it does not follow that every thing is God.

II. REASONS to prove God's essential presence.

1st Reason:—Because he is *infinite.* As he is infinite, he is every where; as he is simple, his whole essence is every where; for as to his infinity, he hath no bounds; and in his simplicity, he hath no parts; and therefore those that deny God's omnipresence, though they pretend to own him infinite, must really conceive him finite.

God is infinite in his *perfections.* None can set bounds to terminate the greatness and excellency of God, *Psal.* 145. 3. *His greatness is unsearchable,* Sept. ουκ ἔστι πέρας there is no end, no limitation; what hath no end is infinite; his power is infinite, *which doth great things and unsearchable,* and there is no end of those things he is able to do: his wisdom infinite; he understands all things past, present, and to come; what is already made, what is possible to be made: his duration infinite, *Job* 36. 26, *The number of his years cannot be searched out,*

ἀπέραντος. To make a finite thing of nothing, is an argument of an infinite virtue; infinite power can only extract something out of nothing, but all things were drawn forth by the word of God, the heaven and all the host of them; the sun, moon, and stars, the rich embellishments of the world, appeared in being at *the breath of his mouth;* the author therefore must be infinite. And since nothing is the cause of God, or of any perfection in him; since he derives not his being, or the least spark of his glorious nature from any thing without him, he cannot be limited in any part of his nature by any thing without him.

The infinity of his power and his other perfections is asserted by the prophet, when he tells us, *Isa.* 40. 15, 19, that *the nations are as a drop of a bucket, or the dust of the balance, and less than nothing and vanity,* they are all so in regard of his power, wisdom, &c. Conceive what a little thing a grain of dust or sand is to all the dust that may be made by the rubbish of a house, what a little thing the heap of the rubbish of a house is to the vast heap of the rubbish of a whole city, such as London; how little that also would be to the dust of a whole empire; how inconsiderable that also to the dust of one quarter of the world; how much less that still to the dust of the whole world; the whole world is composed of an inconceivable number of atoms, and the sea of an inconceivable number of drops; now what a little grain of dust is in comparison of the dust of the whole world; a drop of water from the sea, to all the drops remaining in the sea, that is the whole world to God. Conceive it still less, a mere nothing, yet it is all less than this, in comparison of God; there can be nothing more magnificently expressive of the infinity of God to a human conception, than this expression of God himself in the prophet. In the perfection of a creature, something still may be thought greater to be added to it. But God containing all perfections in himself formally, if they be mere perfections; and eminently, if they be but perfections in the creature mixed with imperfection; nothing can be thought greater, and therefore every one of them is infinite.

If his perfections be infinite, *his essence must be so.*

How God can have infinite perfections, and a finite essence, is inconceivable by a human or angelical understanding; an infinite power, an infinite wisdom, an infinite duration, must needs speak an infinite essence, since the infinity of his attributes is grounded upon the infinity of his essence; to own infinite perfections in a finite subject, is contradictory. The manner of acting by his power, and knowing by his wisdom, cannot exceed the manner of being by his essence. His perfections flow from his essence, and the principle must be of the same rank with what flows from it; and if we conceive his essence to be the cause of his perfections, it is utterly impossible that an infinite effect shall arise from a finite cause; but indeed his perfections are his essence, for though we conceive the essence of God as the subject, and the attributes of God as faculties and qualities in that subject according to our weak model, who cannot conceive of an infinite God without some manner of likeness to ourselves; who find understanding, and will, and power in us distinct from our substance; yet truly and really there is no distinction between his essence and attributes; one is inseparable from the other; his power and wisdom are his essence; and therefore to maintain God infinite in the one, and finite in the other, is to make a monstrous God, and have an unreasonable notion of the Deity; for there would be the greatest disproportion in his nature, since no greater disproportion can possibly be between one thing and another, than there is between finite and infinite. God must not only then be compounded, but have parts of the greatest distance from one another in nature; but God being the most simple being without the least composition, both must be equally infinite. If then his essence be not infinite, his power and wisdom cannot be infinite, which is both against scripture and reason.

Again, how should his essence be finite, and his perfections be infinite; since nothing out of himself gave them either the one or the other? * Again, either the

* Amyrald de Trinitat. p. 89.

essence can be infinite, or it cannot; if it cannot, there must be some cause of that imposibility; that can be nothing without him; because nothing without him can be as powerful as himself, much less too powerful for him: nothing within him can be an enemy to his highest perfection; since he is necessarily what he is, he must be necessarily the most perfect being, and therefore necessarily infinite; since to be something infinitely is a greater perfection than to be something finitely;* if he can be infinite, he is infinite; otherwise he could be greater than he is, and so more blessed and more perfect than he is, which is impossible; for being the most perfect being, to whom nothing can be added, he must needs be infinite.

If therefore God have an infinite essence, he hath an *infinite presence.* An infinite essence cannot be contained in a finite place; as those things which are finite have a bounded space, wherein they are; so that which is infinite hath an unbounded space; for as finiteness speaks limitedness; so infinity speaks unboundedness; and if we grant to God an infinite duration; there is no difficulty in acknowledging an infinite presence: indeed, the infinity of God is a property belonging to him in regard of time and place; he is bounded by no place, and limited to no time.

Again, infinite essence may as well be every where, as infinite power reach every thing; it may as well be present with every being, as infinite power in its working may be present with nothing to bring it into being. Where God works by his power he is present in his essence; because his power and his essence cannot be separated; and therefore his power, wisdom, and goodness, cannot be any where, where his essence is not: his essence cannot be severed from his power, nor his power from his essence; for the power of God is nothing but God acting, and the wisdom of God nothing, but God knowing. As the power of God is always, so is his essence; as the power of God is every where, so is his

* Deus est actus parvus & nullam habet potentiam passivam.

essence; whatsoever God is, he is always, and everywhere.

To think of confining him to a place, is to measure his essence; as to confine his actions, is to limit his power; his essence, being no less infinite than his power and his wisdom, can be no more bounded than his power and wisdom; but they are not separable from his essence, yea they are his essence: if God did not fill the whole world, he would be determined to some place, and excluded from others; and so his substance would have bounds and limits, and then something might be conceived greater than God; for we may conceive that a creature may be made by God of so vast a greatness as to fill the whole world; for the power of God is able to make a body that should take up the whole space between heaven and earth, and reach to every corner of it; but nothing can be conceived by any creature greater than God; he exceeds all things, and is exceeded by none: God therefore cannot be included in heaven, nor included in the earth; cannot be contained in either of them; for if we should imagine them vaster than they are, yet still they would be finite; and if his essence were contained in them, it could be no more infinite than the world which contains it; as water is not of a larger compass than the vessel which contains it.

If the essence of God were limited either in the heavens or earth, it must needs be finite, as the heavens and earth are; but there is no proportion between finite and infinite; God therefore cannot be contained in them. If there were an infinite body, that must be every where; certainly then an infinite spirit must be every where: unless we account him finite, we can render no reason why he should not be in one creature as well as in another; if he be in heaven, which is his creature, why can he not be in the earth, which is also his creature?

2d Reason. Because of the *continual operation of God in the world.* This was one reason which made the heathen believe that there was an infinite spirit in the vast body of the world, acting in every thing, and producing those admirable motions which we see every

where in nature: the cause which acts in the most perfect manner, is also in the most perfect manner present with its effects.

God preserves all, and therefore is in all. The apostle thought it a good induction; *He is not far from us: For in him we live, Acts* 17. 27. *For* being as much as because, shews that from his operation he concluded his real presence with all: it is not his virtue is not far from every one of us; but *He*, his substance, himself; for none that acknowledge a God, will deny the absence of the virtue of God from any part of the world. He works in every thing, every thing lives and works in him; therefore he is present with all,* or rather if things live, they are in God, who gives them life. If things live God is in them, and gives them life: if things move, God is in them, and gives them motion: if things have any being, God is in them, and gives them being; if God withdraws himself, they presently lose their being; and therefore some have compared the creature to the impression of a seal upon the wafer, that cannot be preserved but by the presence of the seal. As his presence was actual with what he created, so his presence is actual with what he preserves, since creation and preservation do so little differ; if God creates things by his essential presence, by the same he supports them; if his substance cannot be disjoined from his preserving power, his power and wisdom cannot be separated from his essence; where there are the marks of the one, there is the presence of the other; for it is by his essence that he is powerful and wise; no man can distinguish the one from the other in a simple being: God doth not preserve and act things by a virtue diffused from him.

It may be demanded, whether that virtue be distinct from God? If it be not, it is then the essence of God; if it be distinct, it is a creature, and then it may be asked, how that virtue which preserves other things, is preserved itself? it must be ultimately resolved into the essence of

* Pont.

God, or there must be a running *in infinitum:* or else, * is that virtue of God a substance or not; is it endued with understanding or not? If it hath understanding, how doth it differ from God? If it wants understanding, can any imagine that the support of the world, the guidance of all creatures, the wonders of nature, can be wrought, preserved, managed by a virtue that hath nothing of understanding in it? If it be not a substance, it can much less be able to produce such excellent operations, as the preserving all the kinds of things in the world, and ordering them to perform such excellent ends; this virtue is therefore God himself, the infinite power and wisdom of God; and therefore wheresoever the effects of these are seen in the world God is essentially present; some creatures indeed act at a distance by a virtue diffused; but such a manner of acting comes from a limitedness of nature, that such a nature cannot be every where present, and extend its substance to all parts; to act by a virtue, speaks the subject finite, and it is a part of indigence.

Kings act in their kingdom by ministers and messengers, because they cannot act otherwise; but God being infinitely perfect, *works all things in all* immediately; † illumination, sanctification, grace, &c. are the immediate works of God in the heart, and immediate agents are present with what they do; it is an argument of the greater perfection of a being, to know things immediately, which are done in several places, than to know them at the second hand by instruments: it is no less a perfection to be every where, rather than to be tied to one place of action; and to act in other places by instruments, for want of a power to act immediately itself. God indeed acts by means and second causes in his providential dispensations in the world, but this is not out of any defect of power to work all immediately himself; but he thereby accommodates his way of acting to the nature of the creature, and the order of things which he hath settled in

* Amyrald de Trinitat. p. 106, 107. † 1 Cor. 12. 6.

the world; and when he works by means, he acts with those means, in those means; sustains their faculties and virtues in them, concurs with them by his power; so that God's acting by means, rather strengthens his essential presence than weakens it; since there is a necessary dependence of the creatures upon the Creator in their being and acting; and what they are, they are by the power of God; what they act, they act in the power of God, concurring with them; they have their motion in him as well as their being; and where the power of God is, his essence is, because they are inseparable; and so this omnipresence ariseth from the simplicity of the nature of God; the more vast any thing is, the less confined. All that will acknowledge God so great as to be able to work all things by his will, without an essential presence, cannot imagine him, upon the same reason, so little as to be contained in, and bounded by any place.

3d Reason. Because of his *supreme perfection.* No perfection is wanting to God; but an unbounded essence is a perfection; a limited one is an imperfection. Though it be a perfection in a man to be wise, yet it is an imperfection that his wisdom cannot rule all the things that concern him; though it be a perfection to be present in a place where his affairs lie, yet is it his imperfection that he cannot be present every where, in the midst of all his concerns; if any man could be so, it would be universally owned as a prime perfection in him above others; is that which would be a perfection in man, to be denied to God? *

As that which hath life, is more perfect than that which hath not life; and that which hath sense is more perfect than that which hath only life, as the plants have; and what hath reason, is more perfect than that which hath only life and sense as the beasts have: so what is every where, is more perfect than that which is bounded in some narrow confines; if a power of motion be more excellent than to be bed-rid;

* Amyrald de Trinitat, p. 74, 75.

and swiftness in a creature, be a more excellent endowment than to be slow and snail like; then to be every where without motion, is unconceivably a greater excellency than to be every where successively by motion. God sets forth his readiness to help his people and punish his enemies; or his omnipresence, by swiftness, or *flying upon the wings of the wind: Psa.* 18. 10. The wind is in every part of the air, where it blows; it cannot be said that it is in this or that point of the air where you feel it, so as to exclude it from another part of the air where you are not; it seems to possess all at once.

If the divine essence had any bounds of place, it would be imperfect, as well as if it had bounds of time; where any thing hath limitation, it hath some defect in being; and therefore if God were confined or concluded, he would be as good as nothing in regard of infiniteness: Whence should this restraint arise? There is no power above him to restrain him to a certain space; if so, then he would not be God, but that power which restrained him would be God: Not from his own nature, for the being every where, implies no contradiction to his nature; if his own nature determined him to a certain place, then if he removed from that place, he would act against his nature; to conceive any such thing of God, is highly absurd.

It cannot be thought God should voluntarily impose any such restraint or confinement upon himself; this would be to deny himself a perfection he might have; if God have not this perfection, it is either because it is inconsistent with his nature; or because he cannot have it; or because he will not. The former cannot be; for if he hath impressed upon air and light a resemblance of his excellency, to diffuse themselves and fill so vast a space; is such an excellency inconsistent with the Creator more than the creature? Whatsoever perfection the creature hath, is eminently in God, *Psal.* 94. 8, 9. *Understand, O ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that hath planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?*

By the same reason he that hath given such a power to those creatures, air and light, shall not he be much more filling all spaces of the world. It is so clear a rule, that the Psalmist fixes a folly and brutishness upon those that deny it; it is not therefore inconsistent with his nature, it were not then a perfection, but an imperfection; but whatsoever is an excellency in creatures, cannot in a way of eminency be an imperfection in God; if it be then a perfection, and God want it, it is because he cannot have it; where then is his power? How can he be then the fountain of his own being? If he will not, where is his love to his own nature and glory? since no creature would deny that to itself which it can have, and is an excellency to it; God therefore hath not only a power or fitness to be every where, but he is actually every where.

4th Reason. Because of his *Immutability.* If God did not fill all the spaces of heaven and earth, but only possess one, yet it must be acknowledged that God hath a power to move himself to another: it were absurd to fix God in a part of the heavens, like a star in an orb, without a power of motion to another place. If he be therefore essentially in heaven, may he not be upon the earth if he please, and transfer his substance from one place to another? to say he cannot, is to deny him a perfection which he hath bestowed upon his creatures; the angels, his messengers, are sometimes in heaven, sometimes on the earth; the eagles, meaner creatures, are sometimes in the air out of sight, sometimes upon the earth. If he therefore move and recede from one place, and settle in another, does he not declare himself mutable, by being where he was not before, and in not being where he was before? He would not fill heaven and earth at once, but successively; no man can be said to fill a room, that moves from one part of a room to another; if therefore any in their imaginations, confine God to the heavens, they render him less than his creatures; if they allow him a power of motion from one place to another, they conceive him changeable; and in either of them they own him no greater than a finite and limited being; limited to heaven,

if they fix him there: limited to that space to which they imagine him to move.

5th Reason. Because of his *Omnipotency.* The Almightiness of God is a notion settled in the minds of all; that God can do whatsoever he pleases, every thing that is not against the purity of his nature, and doth not imply a contradiction in itself; he can therefore create millions of worlds greater than this; and millions of heavens greater than this heaven he hath already created; if so, he is then in inconceivable spaces beyond this world, for his essence is not less and narrower than his power; and his power is not to be thought of a further extent than his essence; he cannot be excluded therefore from those vast spaces where his power may fix those worlds if he please; if so, it is no wonder that he should fill this world; and there is no reason to exclude God from the narrow space of this world, that is not contained in infinite spaces beyond the world.

God is wheresoever he hath a power to act, but he hath a power to act every where in the world, every where out of the world; he is therefore every where in the world, every where out of the world. Before this world was made, he had a power to make it in the space where now it stands: was he not then unlimitedly where the world now is, before the world received a being by his powerful word? Why should he not then be in every part of the world now? Can it be thought that God, who was immense before, should, after he had created the world, contract himself to the limits of one of his creatures, and tie himself to a particular place of his own creation, and be less after his creation than he was before?

This might also be argued from his *eternity.* What is eternal in duration, is immense in essence; the same reason which renders him eternal, renders him immense; that which proves him to be always, will prove him to be every where.

The third thing is, Propositions for the further clearing this doctrine *from any exceptions.*

1. This truth is not weakened by the expressions in

Scripture, where God is said to dwell in heaven, and in the temple.

He is indeed said *to sit in heaven*, and to *dwell on high*; but he is no where said to dwell only in the heavens, as confined to them. It is the court of his majestical presence, but not the prison of his essence. For when we are told, that *heaven is his throne*, we are told with the same breath, that *the earth is his footstool*. He dwells on high in regard of the excellency of his nature; but he is in all places in regard of the diffusion of his presence. The soul is essentially in all parts of the body, but it doth not exert the same operations in all; the more noble discoveries of it are in the head and heart: in the head, where it exercises the chief senses for the enriching the understanding: in the heart, where it vitally resides, and communicates life and motion to the rest of the body.

And so God may be said to dwell in heaven, in regard of the more excellent and majestic representation of himself both to the creatures that inhabit the place, as angels and blessed spirits; and also in those marks of his greatness which he hath planted there, those spiritual natures which have a nobler stamp of God upon them, and those excellent bodies, as the *sun* and the *stars*, which as so many tapers light us to behold his glory, and astonish the minds of men when they gaze upon them. It is his court, where he hath the most solemn worship from his creatures, all his courtiers attending there with a pure love, and glowing zeal. He reigns there in a special manner, without any opposition to his government; it is therefore called his *holy dwelling place*, 2 *Chron.* 3. 27. The earth hath not that title, since sin cast a stain, and a ruining curse upon it. The earth is not his throne, because his government is opposed.

But heaven is none of Satan's precinct, and the rule of God is uncontradicted by the inhabitants of it. It is from thence also he hath given the greatest discoveries of himself: thence he sends the angels, his messengers, his Son for redemption, his Spirit for sanctification. From heaven his gifts drop down upon our heads, and his grace

upon our hearts. From thence the chief blessings of earth descend. The motions of the heavens fatten the earth; and the heavenly bodies are but stewards to the earthly comforts for man by their influence. Heaven is the richest, vastest, most steadfast and majestic part of the visible creation. It is there where he will at last manifest himself to his people in the full conjunction of grace and glory, and be for ever open to his people in uninterrupted expressions of goodness, and discoveries of his presence, as a reward of their labour and service. And in these respects it may peculiarly be called his throne. And this no more hinders his essential presence in all parts of the earth, than it does his gracious presence in the hearts of his people. God is in heaven in regard of the manifestation of his glory; in hell by the expressions of his justice; in the earth by the discoveries of his wisdom, power, patience, and compassion; in his people by the monuments of his grace; and in all in regard of his substance.

He is said also to dwell in the ark and temple. It is called, *Psal.* 26. 8, *The habitation of his house*, and the *place where his honour dwells;* and he is said, *Zech.* 8. 5, to dwell in Jerusalem as in his holy mountain; *The mountain of the Lord of hosts*, in regard of publishing his oracles, answering their prayers, manifesting more of his goodness to the Israelites, than to any other nation of the world, erecting his true worship among them, which was not settled in any part of the world besides; and his worship is principally intended in that Psalm. The ark is the place where his honour dwells; the worship of God is called the glory of God, *They changed the glory of God into an image made like to corruptible men*, i. e. they changed the worship of God into idolatry; and to that also doth the place in Zechariah refer.

Now because he is said to dwell in heaven, is he essentially only there? Is he not as essentially in the temple and ark, as he is in heaven, since there are as high expressions of his habitations there, as of his dwelling in heaven? If he dwell only in heaven, how came he to

dwell in the temple; both are asserted in scripture, and one as much as the other. If his dwelling in heaven did not hinder his dwelling in the ark, it could as little hinder the presence of his essence on the earth. To dwell in heaven, and in one part of the earth at the same time, is all one as to dwell in all parts of heaven, and all parts of earth. If he were in heaven, and in the ark and temple, it was the same essence in both, though not the same kind of manifestation of himself.

If by his dwelling in heaven he meant his whole essence, why is it not also to be meant by his dwelling in the ark? It was not sure part of his essence that was in heaven, and part of his essence that was on earth, his essence would then be divided; and can it be imagined, that he would be in heaven and the ark at the same time, and not in the spaces between? Could his essence be split into fragments, and a gap made in it, that two distant spaces should be filled by him, and all between be empty of him. So that God's being said to dwell in heaven, and in the temple, is so far from impairing the truth of this doctrine, that it more confirms and evidences it.

2. Nor do the expressions of God's *coming to us*, or *departing from us*, impair this doctrine of his omnipresence.

God is said *to hide his face* from his people, to be *far from the wicked;* and the Gentiles are said to be *afar off*, viz. from God; and upon the manifestation of Christ *made near*, *Psal.* 10. 1. *Prov.* 15. 29. *Eph.* 2. 17. These must not be understood of any distance or nearness of his essence, for that is equally near to all persons and things; but of some other special way and manifestation of his presence. Thus God is said to be in believers by love, as they are in him; *He that abides in love, abides in God, and God in him*, 1 *John* 4. 15. He that loves, is in that which is beloved. God is in a righteous man by special grace, and far from the wicked in regard of such special works; and God is said to be in a place by a special manifestation, as when he was in the blush; or manifesting his glory upon Mount Sinai; *The glory*

of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai. God is said to hide his face, when he withdraws his comforting presence, disturbs the repose of our hearts, flasheth terror into our consciences, when he puts men under the smart of the cross, as though he had ordered his mercy utterly to depart from them; or when he withdraws his special assisting providence from us, so he departed from Saul, when he withdrew his direction and protection from him in the concerns of his government, 1 *Sam.* 16. 14. *The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul,* i. e. the spirit of government.

God may be far from us in one respect, and near to us another; far from us in regard of comfort, yet near to us in regard of support, when his essential presence continues the same; this is a necessary consequent upon the infinity of God, the other is an act of the will of God; so he was said to forsake Christ, in regard of his obscuring his glory from his human nature, and inflicting his wrath; though he was near to him in regard of his grace, and preserved him from contracting any spot in his sufferings. We do not say the sun is departed out of the heavens when it is beclouded; it remains in the same part of the heavens, passes on its course, though its beams do not reach us by reason of the bar between us and it. The soul is in every part of the body, in regard of its substance, and constantly in it, though it does not act so sprightly and vigorously at one time as another in one and the same member, and discover itself so sensibly in its operations; so all the various effects of God towards the sons of men, are but divers operations of one and the same essence.

He is far from us, or near to us, as he is a Judge or Benefactor; when he comes to punish, it notes not the approach of his essence, but the stroke of his justice; when he comes to benefit, it is not by a new access of his essence, but an efflux of his grace; he departs from us when he leaves us to the frowns of his justice; he comes to us when he encircles us in the arms of his mercy; but he was equally present with us in both dispensations, in regard of his essence: and likewise God

is said to *come down, Gen.* 11. 5, *And the Lord came down to see the city;* when he does some signal and wonderful works which attract the minds of men to the acknowledgment of a supreme power and providence in the world, who judged God absent and careless before.

3. Nor is the essential presence of God with all creatures *any disparagement to him.* Since it was no disparagement to create the heaven and the earth, it is no disparagement to him to fill them; if he were essentially present with them, when he created them, it is no dishonour to him to be essentially present with them, to support them; if it were his glory to create them by his essence, when they were nothing; can it be his disgrace to be present by his essence, since they are something, and something good, and very good in his eye? *Gen.* 1. 31. God saw every thing, and, *behold, it was very good,* all ordered to declare his goodness, wisdom, power, and to make him adorable to man, and therefore he took complacency in them. There is a harmony in all things, a combination in them for those glorious ends for which God created them; and is it a disgrace for God to be present with his own harmonious composition? Is it not a musician's glory to touch with his fingers the treble, the least and tenderest string, as well as the strongest and greatest base? Hath not every thing some stamp of God's own being upon it, since he eminently contains in himself the perfections of all his works? Whatsoever hath being, hath a footstep of God upon it, who is all being; every thing in the earth is his footstool, having a mark of his foot upon it, all declare the being of God, because they had their being from God; and will God account it any disparagement to him to be present with that which confirms his being, and the glorious perfections of his nature to his intelligent creatures? the meanest things are not without their virtues, which may boast God's being the Creator of them; and rank them in the midst of his works of wisdom as well as power.

Doth God debase himself to be present by his essence, with the things he hath made, more than to know them by his essence? Is not the least thing known by him? How?

not by a faculty or act distinct from his essence, but by his essence itself. How is any thing disgraceful to the essential presence of God, that is not disgraceful to his knowledge by his essence? Besides, would God make any thing that should be an invincible reason to him to part with his own infiniteness, by a contraction of his own essence into a less compass than before? It was immense before, it had no bounds; and would God make a world that he would be ashamed to be present with, and continue it to the diminution and lesssening of himself, rather than annihilate it to avoid the disparagement? This were to impeach the wisdom of God, and cast a blemish upon his infinite understanding, that he knows not the consequences of his work, or is well contented to be impaired in the immensity of his own essence by it. No man thinks it a dishonour to light, a most excellent creature, to be present with a toad or serpent; and though there be an infinite disproportion between light, a creature, and the Father of Lights, the Creator. Yet *God being a Spirit, knows how to be with bodies as if they were not bodies. And being jealous of his own honour, would not, could not do any thing that might impair it.

4. Nor will it follow, that because God is essentially every where, *that every thing is God.* God is not every where by any conjunction, composition, or mixture with any thing on earth; when light is in every part of a chrystal globe, and encircles it close on every side, do they become one? No, the chrystal remains what it is, and the light retains its own nature. God is not in us as a part of us, but as an efficient and preserving cause; it is not by his essential presence, but his efficacious presence, that he brings any person into a likeness to his own nature. God is so in his essence with things, as to be distinct from them, as a cause from the effect; as a Creator different from the creature, preserving their nature, not communicating his own; his essence touches all, is in conjunction with none; finite and infinite cannot be joined, he is not far from us, therefore near to us; so near that

* Gassend.

we *live and move in him.* Nothing is God because it moves in him, any more than a fish in the sea is the sea, or a part of the sea, because it moves in it; does a man that holds a thing in the hollow of his hand,* transform it by that action, and make it like his hand? The soul and body are more straitly united, than the essence of God is by his presence with any creature.

The soul is in the body as a form in matter, and from their union arises a man; yet in this near conjunction, both body and soul remain dictinct; the soul is not the body, nor the body the soul; they both have distinct natures and essences; the body can never be changed into a soul, nor the soul into a body; no more can God into the creature, or the creature into God. Fire is in heated iron in every part of it, so that it seems to be nothing but fire; yet is not fire and iron the same thing. But such a kind of arguing against God's omnipresence, that if God were essentially present, every thing would be God; would exclude him from heaven as well as from earth. By the same reason, since they acknowledge God essentially in heaven, the heaven where he is, should be changed into the nature of God; and by arguing against his presence in earth, upon this ground they run such an inconvenience, that they must own him to be no where, and that which is no where is nothing. Doth the earth become God, because God is essentially there, any more than the heavens, where God is acknowledged by all to be essentially present?

Again, if where God is essentially, that must be God, then if they place God in a point of the heavens, not only that point must be God, but all the world; because if that point be God, because God is there, then the point touched by that point must be God, and so consequently as far as there are any points touched by one another. We live and move in God, so we live and move in the air; we are no more God by that, than we are mere air, because we breathe in it, and it enters into all the pores of

* Amyrald de Trinit. p. 99, 100.

our body; nay, where there was a straiter union of the divine nature to the human in our Saviour, yet the nature of both was distinct, and the humanity was not changed into the divinity, nor the divinity into the humanity.

5. Nor doth it follow, that because God is every where, therefore *a creature may be worshipped without idolatry.* Some of the heathens who acknowledged God's omnipresence, abused it to the countenancing idolatry; because God was resident in every thing, they thought every thing might be worshipped; and some have used it as an argument against this doctrine; the best doctrines may by men's corruption be drawn out into unreasonable and pernicious conclusions. Have you not met with any that from the doctrine of God's free mercy, and our Saviour's satisfactory death, have drawn poison to feed their lusts, and consume their souls; a poison composed by their own corruption, and not offered by those truths. The apostle intimates to us, that some did, or at least were ready to be more lavish in sinning, because God was abundant in grace; *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound, Rom.* 6. 1, 2, 15.

When he prevents an objection that he thought might be made by some. But as to this case, since though God be present in every thing, yet every thing retains its nature distinct from the nature of God; therefore it is not to have a worship due to the excellency of God. As long as any thing remains a creature, it is only to have the respect from us, which is due to it in the rank of creatures. When a prince is present with his guard, or if he should go arm in arm with a peasant, is therefore the veneration and honour due to the prince to be paid to the peasant, or any of his guard? Would the presence of the prince excuse it, or would it not rather aggravate it? He acknowledged such a person equal to me, by giving him my rights, even in my sight. Though God dwelt in the temple, would not the Israelites have been accounted guilty of idolatry had they worshipped the images of the cherubim, or the ark, or the altar, as objects of worship, which were erected only as means for his service?

Is there not as much reason to think God was as essentially present in the temple, as in heaven; since the same expressions are used of the one and the other.

The sanctuary is called *Jer.* 17. 13, the *glorious high throne;* and he is said, *Psa.* 80. 1, to *dwell between the cherubims,* i. e. the two cherubims that were at the two ends of the mercy-seat, appointed by God as the two sides of his throne in the sanctuary, *Exod.* 25. 18, where he was to *dwell,* and meet and *commune with his people.* Could this excuse Manasseh's idolatry in bringing a carved image into the house of God? 1 *Chron.* 33. 7. Had it been a good answer to the charge, God is present here, and therefore every thing may be worshipped as God? if he be only essentially in heaven, would it not be idolatry to direct a worship to the heavens or any part of it as a due object, because of the presence of God there? Though we look up to the heavens, where we pray and worship God, yet heaven is not the object of worship, the soul abstracts God from the creature.

6. Nor is God defiled by being present with those creatures which seem impure to us. Nothing is impure in the eye of God as his creature; he could never else have pronounced all good; whatsoever is impure to us, yet as it is a creature, it owes itself to the power of God: his essence is no more defiled by being present with it; than his power by producing it: no creature is foul in itself, though it may seem so to us. Is not the power of God present with the unborn child working *curiously in the lower parts of the earth?* are his eyes defiled by seeing the *substance* when it is yet *imperfect?* or his hand defiled by writing every member in his *book?* *Psa.* 139. 15, 16. Have not the vilest and most noisome things, excellent medicinal virtues? How are they endued with them? How are those qualities preserved in them? By any thing without God, or no? every artificer looks with pleasure upon the work he hath wrought with art and skill; can his essence be defiled by being present with them, any more than it was in giving them such virtues, and preserving them? God measures

the heaven and earth with his hand, is his hand defiled by the evil influences of the planets, or the corporeal impurities of the earth? Nothing can be filthy in the eye of God but sin, since every thing else owes its being to him.

What may appear deformed and unworthy to us, is not so to the Creator; he sees beauty where we see deformity; finds goodness where we behold what is nauseous to us. All creatures being the effects of his power, may be the objects of his presence; can any place be more foul than hell, if you take it either for the hell of the damned, or for the grave? yet he is there. When Satan appeared before God, and God spake with him, could God contract any impurity by being present where that spirit was, more impure than any corporeal, noisome, and defiling thing can be? No, God is purity to himself in the midst of noisomeness; a heaven to himself in the midst of hell: whoever heard of a sun-beam stained by shining upon a quag-mire, any more than sweetened by breaking into a perfumed room? * Though the light shines upon pure and impure things, yet it mixes not with either; so though God be present with devils and wicked men yet without any mixture; he is present with their essence to sustain and support not in their defection, wherein lies their defilement; and which is not a physical but a moral evil; our impurities can never touch an incorporeal substance.

Spirits are not present with us in the same manner that one body is present with another; bodies can, by a touch only, defile bodies; could the angel that came into the lions' den, to deliver Daniel, be any more disturbed by the stench of the place, than he could be torn by the teeth of the beasts? Their spiritual nature secures them against any infection, when they are *ministering spirits* to persecuted believers in their prisons. *Acts* 12. The soul is straitly united with the body, but it is not made white or black, by the whiteness or blackness of its habitation; is it infected by the corporeal impurities of the body,

* Shelford of the Attributes, p. 170.

while it continually dwells in a sea of pollution? If the body be cast into a common shore, is the soul defiled by it? Can a diseased body derive contagion to the spirit that inhabits it? Is it not the purer by grace, the more the body is infected by nature; Hezekiah's spirit was scarce ever more fervent with God, than when the *sore*, which some think to be a plague, was upon him; how can any corporeal filth impair the impurity of the divine essence? It may as well be said, that God is not present in *Fight for his people*, *Joshua* 23. 10, because he would not be disturbed by the noise of cannons and clashing of swords, as that he is not present in the world, because of its abounding impurities. Let us therefore conclude this with the expression of a learned man of our own; * "to deny the omnipresence of God, because of ill scented places, is to measure God rather by the nicety of sense, than by the sagacity of reason."

* Dr. More.

PART III.

THE GENERAL APPLICATION OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.

Omnipresence ascribed to Christ—Confirms the spirituality of God—An argument for his providence—Omnicience inferred from hence—His incomprehensibility—Supreme grandeur—His omnipresence forgotten and despised—The thoughts of it terrible to sinners—The consolation of believers—In their temptations—Afflictions—Duties—Special services—This truth should be the subject of much thought and reflection—A shield against temptations—An incentive to holy actions—Will remove distractions in worship—We should be solicitous for more of its influence.

IV. WE now come to the improvement of the subject.

I. The omnipresence of God affords us much *information.*

1. As eternity and immutability, two incommunicable properties of the divine nature, are ascribed to Christ; so also is this of omnipresence or immensity. *No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven, John* 3. 13. Not which *was,* but which *is.* He comes from heaven by incarnation, and remains in heaven by his divinity. He was, while he spake to Nicodemus, locally on earth, in regard of his humanity; but in heaven according to his Deity, as well as upon earth in the union of his divine and human nature. He descended upon earth, but he

left not heaven; he was in the world before he came in the flesh, *John* 1. 10, *He was in the world, and the world was made by him.* He was in the world, as the *light that enlightens every man that comes into the world.* In the world as God, before he was in the world as man. He was then in the world as man, while he discoursed with Nicodemus; yet so, that he was also in heaven as God.

There is no creature but is bounded in place, either circumscribed as body, or determined as spirit to be in one space, so as not to be in another at the same time; to leave a place where they were, and possess a place where they were not. But Christ is so on earth, that at the same time he is in heaven; he is therefore infinite. To be in heaven and earth at the same moment of time is a property solely belonging to the Deity, wherein no creature can be a partner with him. He was in the world before he came to the world, and *the world was made by him, John,* 1. 10. His coming was not as the coming of angels, that leave heaven and begin to be on earth, where they were not before; but such a presence as can be ascribed only to God, who fills heaven and earth.

Again, if all things were made by him, then he was present with all things which were made; for where there is a presence of power, there is also a presence of essence; and therefore he is still present: for the right and power of conservation follows the power of creation. And according to this divine nature, he promiseth his presence with his church. *There am I in the midst of them, Mat.* 18. 20. And, *I am with you alway, even to the end of the world, Mat.* 28. 20, i. e. by his divinity: for he had before told them that they were not to have him always with them, i. e. according to his humanity; but in his divine nature he is present with, and walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. If we understand it of a presence by his spirit in the midst of the church, doth it invalidate his essential presence? No, he is no less than the spirit whom he sends; and therefore as little confined as the spirit is, who dwells in every believer: and this may also be inferred from *John* 10. 30, *my Father and I are one;* not

one by *consent*, though that be included; but one in power: for he speaks not of their consent, but of their joint power in keeping his people. Where there is unity of essence, there is unity of presence.

2. Here is a confirmation of *the spiritual nature of God.* If he were an infinite body, he could not fill heaven and earth, but with the exclusion of all creatures. Two bodies cannot be in the same space; they may be near one another, but not in any of the same points together. A body bounded he hath not, for that would destroy his immensity; he could not then fill heaven and earth, because a body cannot be at one and the same time in two different spaces; but God doth not fill heaven at one time, and the earth at another, but both at the same time. Besides, a limited body cannot be said to fill the whole earth, but one particular space in the earth at a time. A body may fill the earth with its virtue, as the sun, but not with its substance. Nothing can be every where with a corporeal weight and mass; but God being infinite, is not tied to any part of the world, but penetrates all, and equally acts by his infinite power in all.

3. Here is an argument for *providence.* His presence is mentioned in the text, in order to his government of the affairs of the world. Is he every where to be unconcerned with every thing? Before the world had a being, God was present with himself; since the world hath a being, he is present with his creatures, to exercise his wisdom in the ordering, as he did his power in the production of them. As the knowledge of God is not a bare contemplation of a thing, so his presence is not a bare inspection of it. Were it an idle, careless presence, it were a presence to no purpose, which cannot be imagined of God. Infinite power, goodness, and wisdom being every where present with his essence, are never without their exercise. He never manifests any of his perfections, but the manifestation is full of some indulgence and benefit to his creatures.

It cannot be supposed that God should neglect those things, wherewith he is constantly present in a way of

efficiency and operation. He is not every where, without acting every where. Wherever his essence is, there is a power and virtue worthy of God every where dispensed.* He governs by his presence what he made by his power; and is present as an agent with all his works. His power and essence are together, to preserve them while he pleases, as his power and his essence are together to create them when he saw good to do it. Every creature hath a stamp of God, and his presence is necessary to keep the impression standing upon the creature. As all things are his works, they are the objects of his care; and the wisdom he employed in framing them will not suffer him to be careless of them. His presence with them, engages him in honour not to be a negligent governor. His immensity fits him for government; and where there is a fitness, there is an exercise of government, where there are objects for the exercise of it.

He is worthy to have the universal rule of the world. He can be present in all places of his empire, there is nothing can be done by any of his subjects, but in his sight. As his eternity renders him king always, so his immensity renders him king every where. If he were only present in heaven, it might occasion a suspicion that he minded only the things of heaven, and had no concern for things below that vast body; but if he be present here, his presence hath a tendency to the government of those things with which he is present. We are all in him as fish in the sea; and he bears all creatures in the arms of his goodness. It is most certain that his presence with his people is far from being an idle one; for when he promises to be with them, he adds some special cordial, as, *I will be with thee, and bless thee. I am with thee, and I will strengthen thee; I will help thee, I will uphold thee, Gen.* 26. 3. *Jer.* 15. 20. *Isa.* 41. 10, 14. Infinite goodness will never countenance a negligent presence.

4. The *omniscience* of God is inferred from hence. If God be present every where, he must needs know what is done every where. It is for this end he proclaims

* Cyril.

himself a God filling heaven and earth, in the text, *Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord?* I have heard what the prophets say, that prophesy lies in my name: if I fill heaven and earth, the most secret thing cannot be hid from my sight. An intelligent being cannot be every where present, and more intimate in every thing, than it can be in itself; but he must know what is done without, what is thought within. Nothing can be obscure to him, who is in every part of the world, in every part of his creatures. Not a thought can start up but in his sight, who is present in the souls and minds of every thing. How easy is it with him, to whose essence the world is but a point, to know and observe every thing done in this world, as any of us can know what is done in one point of place where we are present? If light were an understanding being, it would behold and know every thing done, where it diffuseth itself. *God is light* (as light in a chrystal glass, all within it, all without it) and is not ignorant of what is done within and without; no ignorance can be charged upon him who hath an universal presence. Hence by the way we may take notice of the wonderful patience of God, who bears with so many provocations; not from a principle of ignorance, for he bears with sins that are committed near him, in his sight, sins that he sees, and cannot but see.

5. Hence may be inferred the *incomprehensibility* of God. He that fills heaven and earth cannot be contained in any thing; he fills the understandings of men, the understandings of angels, but is comprehended by neither; it is a rashness to think to find out any bounds of God; there is no measuring of an infinite being, if it were to be measured it were not infinite; but because it is infinite, it is not to be measured. God sits *above the cherubim*, above the fulness, above the brightness, not only of a human, but a created understanding: nothing is more present than God, yet nothing more hid; he is light and yet obscurity;* his perfections are visible, yet unsearchable; we know there is an infinite God, but it surpasseth

* Κρυφιότης Dyonisius called God.

the compass of our minds; we know there is no number so great, but another may be added to it; but no man can put it in practice without losing himself in a maze of figures.

What is the reason we comprehend not many, nay most things in the world? partly from the excellency of the object, and partly from the imperfection of our understanding. How can we then comprehend God who exceeds all, and is exceeded by none; contains all, and is contained by none; is above our understanding, as well as above our sense? As considered in himself infinite; as considered in comparison with our understandings, incomprehensible; who can with his eye measure the breadth, length, and depth of the sea, and at one cast view every dimension of the heavens: God is greater, and *we cannot know him;* he fills the understanding as he fills heaven and earth; yet is above the understanding as he is above heaven and earth: he is known by faith, enjoyed by love, but comprehended by no mind. God is not contained in that one syllable, God; by it we apprehend an excellent and unlimited nature; himself only understands himself, and can unveil himself.

6. How *wonderful* is God, and how like unto *nothing* are creatures! *Deut.* 33. 3, *Ascribe the greatness to our God;* he is admirable in the consideration of his power, in the extent of his understanding, and no less wonderful in the immensity of his essence; that as Austin saith, he is in the world, yet not confined to it; he is out of the world, yet not debarred from it; he is above the world, yet not elevated by it; he is below the world, yet not depressed by it; he is above all, equalled by none; he is in all, not because he needs them, but they stand in need of him; this as well as eternity, makes a vast disproportion between God and the creature. The creature is bounded by a little space, and no space is so great as to bound the Creator. By this we may take a prospect of our own nothingness; as in the consideration of God's holiness we are minded of our own impurity; and in the thoughts of his wisdom have a

view of our own folly; and in the meditation of his power, have a sense of our weakness; so his immensity should make us according to our own nature, appear little in our own eyes.

What little, little, little things are we when compared with God! Less than an atom in the beams of the sun; poor drops to a God that fills heaven and earth, and yet dare we to boast against him, and dash ourselves against a rock? If the consideration of ourselves in comparison with others, be apt to puff us up, the consideration of ourselves in comparison with God, will be sufficient to humble us. If we consider him in the greatness of his essence, there is but little more proportion between him and us, than between being and not being, than between a drop and the ocean. How should we ever think of God without a holy admiration of his greatness, and a deep sense of our own littleness! And as the angels cover their faces before him; with what awe should such worms as we are come into his sight! And since God fills heaven and earth with his presence, we should fill heaven and earth with his glory; for this end he created angels to praise him in heaven, and men to worship him on earth, that the places he fills with his presence may be filled with his praise: we should be swallowed up in admirations of the immensity of God, as men are at the first sight of the sea, when they behold a mass of waters, without beholding the bounds and immense depth of it.

7. How much is this attribute of God *forgotten or contemned!* We pretend to believe him to be present every where, and yet many live as if he were present no where.

It is commonly *forgotten, or not believed.* All the extravagancies of men may be traced to the forgetfulness of this attribute, as their spring. The first speech of Adam in Paradise after his fall, *Gen.* 3. 10, testified his unbelief of this; *I heard thy voice in the garden, and I hid myself*, his ear understood the voice of God, but his mind did not conclude the presence of God; he thought the trees could shelter him from him, whose eye was present in the minutest parts of the earth; he that

thought after his sin, that he could hide himself from the presence of his justice, thought before that he could hide himself from the presence of his knowledge, and being deceived in the one, he would try what would be the fruit of the other. In both he forgets, if not denies, this attribute; either corrupt notions of God, or a slight belief of what in general men assent unto, gives birth to every sin. In all transgressions there is something of atheism; either denying the being of God, or a dash upon some perfection of God; not believing his holiness is to hate it, his truth that threatens, his justice to punish it, and his presence to observe it. Though God be not afar off in his essence, he is afar off in the apprehension of the sinner.*

There is no wicked man, but if he be an atheist, he is a heretic; and to gratify his lust, will fancy himself to be out of the presence of his Judge: his reason tells him, God is present with him, his lust presseth him to embrace the season of a sensual pleasure; he will forsake his reason, and prove a heretic, that he may be an undisturbed sinner; and sins doubly both in the error of his mind, and the vileness of his practice; he will think of God with those in *Job* 22. 14, *Veiled with thick clouds*, and not able to pierce into the lower world; as if his presence and cares were confined to celestial things, and the earth were too low a sphere for his essence to reach, at least with any credit. It is forgotten by good men, when they fear too much the designs of their enemies; *Fear not for I am with thee, Isa.* 43. 5. If the presence of God be enough to strengthen against fear, then the prevailing of fear issues from our forgetfulness of it.

This attribute of God's omnipresence is for the most part *contemned.* When men will commit that in the presence of God which they would be afraid or ashamed to do before the eye of man. Men do not practice that modesty before God, as before men. He that would restrain his tongue out of fear of men's eye, will not restrain

* Drexel. Nicet. lib. 2. cap. 10.

either tongue or hands out of fear of God's: What is the language of this, but that God is not present with us, or his presence ought to be of less regard with us, and have less influence upon us, than that of a creature?* Ask the thief why he dares to steal? Will he not answer, *no eye sees him?* Ask the adulterer why he strips himself of his chastity, and invades the rights of another? Will he not answer, *no eye sees me?* He *disguiseth himself* to be unseen by man, but slights the all-seeing eye of God. If only a *man know them, they are in terror of the shadow of death*, they are planet-struck; but stand unshaken at the presence of God. Is not this to account God as limited as man, as ignorant, as absenting, as if God were something less than those things which restrain us? It is debasing God below a creature.

If we can forbear sin from any awe of the presence of man to whom we are equal in regard of nature; or from the presence of a very mean man, to whom we are superior in regard of condition, and not forbear it because we are within the sight of God; we respect him not only as our inferior, but inferior to the meanest man or child of his creation, in whose sight we would not commit the like action. It is to represent him as a sleepy, negligent, or careless God; as though any thing might be concealed from him, before whom the least fibres of the heart are anatomized and open, who sees as plainly midnight as noon-day sins. Now this is a high aggravation of sin: to break a king's laws in his sight, is more bold than to violate them behind his back; as it was Haman's offence when he lay upon Esther's bed to force the queen before the king's face. The least iniquity receives a high tincture from this. And no sin can be little that is an affront in the face of God, and committed under the eyes of his holiness. As if a slave dishonour his master, and disobey his commands in his presence.

And hath it not often been thus with us? Have we not been disloyal to God in his sight, before his eyes, those pure eyes that cannot behold iniquity without anger and

*Drexel. Nicet. lib. 2. cap. 10.

grief? *Isa.* 65. 12. *Ye did evil before my eyes.* Nathan chargeth this home upon David, 2 *Sam.* 12. 9. *Thou hast despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight.* And David in his repentance, reflects upon himself for it. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. Psal.* 51. 4. I observed not thy presence, I neglected thee while thy eye was upon me. And this consideration should sting our hearts in all our confessions of our crimes. Men will be afraid of the presence of others, whatsoever they think in their heart. How unworthily do we deal with God, in not giving him so much as an eye-service, which we do man?

8. How terrible should the thoughts of *this attribute be to sinners!* How foolish is it, to imagine, any hiding-place from the incomprehensible God, who fills and contains all things, and is present in every point of the world! When men have shut the door, and made all darkness within, to meditate or commit a crime, they cannot in the most intricate recesses be sheltered from the presence of God. If they could separate themselves from their own shadows, they could not avoid his company, or be obscured from his sight, *Psal.* 139. 12, *the darkness and light are both alike to him.* Hypocrites cannot disguise their sentiments from him, he is in the most secret recess of their hearts. No thought is hid, no lust is secret, but the eye of God beholds all. He is present with our heart when we imagine, with our hands when we act. We may exclude the sun from our solitudes, but not the eyes of God from beholding our actions. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. Prov.* 15. 3. He lies in the depths of our souls, and sees afar off our designs before we have conceived them. He is in the greatest darkness, as well as the clearest light; in the closest thought of the mind, as well as the openest expressions.

Nothing can be hid from him, no not in the darkest cells, or thickest walls. *He compasseth our path wherever we are,* and *is acquainted with all our ways, Psa.* 139. 3.

* Quo fugis Encelade quas cunq; accesseris oras, sub Jove semper eris.

He is as much present with wicked men to observe their sins, as he is to detest them. Where he is present in his essence, he is present in his attributes; in his holiness to hate, and in his justice to punish, if he please to speak the word. It is strange men should not be mindful of this, when their very sins themselves might put them in mind of his presence. Whence hast thou the power to act? Who preserves thy being, whereby thou art capable of committing that evil? Is it not his essential presence that sustains us, and his arm that supports us? And where can any man *fly from his presence?* Not the vast regions of heaven could shelter a sinning angel from his eye. How was Adam ferreted out of his hiding-places in paradise? Nor can we find in the depths of the sea a sufficient covering to us. If we were with Jonah shut up in the belly of a whale; if we had the *wings of the morning*, as quick a motion as the light at the dawning of the day, that doth in an instant surprise and over-power the regions of darkness; and could pass to the *utmost parts of the earth* or *hell*, there we should find him, *there his eye would be upon us*, there would his hand lay hold of us, and lead us as a conqueror triumphing over a captive. Nay, if we could leap out of the compass of heaven and earth, we should find as little reserves from him. He is without the world in those infinite spaces which the mind of man can imagine. In regard of his immensity, nothing in being can be distant from him, wheresoever it is.

II. The comfort to be derived from the consideration of Jehovah's omnipresence. That God is present every where is as much a comfort to a good man, as it is a terror to a wicked one. He is every where for his people, not only by a necessary perfection of his nature, but an immense diffusion of his goodness. He is in all creatures as their preserver, in the damned as their terror, in his people as their protector. He fills hell with his severity, heaven with his glory, his people with his grace. He is with his people as light in darkness, a fountain in a garden, as manna in the ark. God is in the world as a spring of preservation, in the church as his cabinet, a

spring of grace and consolation. A man is present sometimes in the field, but more delightfully in his garden.

A vineyard, as it hath more of cost, so more of care, and a watchful presence of the owner. *Isa.* 27. 3, *I the Lord do keep it*, viz. his vineyard; *I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.* As there is a presence of essence, which is *natural;* so there is a presence of grace, which is *fœderal;* a presence by covenant, *I will not leave, I will be with thee;* this latter depends upon the former; for take away the immensity of God, and you leave no foundation for his universal gracious presence with his people in all their emergencies, in all their hearts. And therefore where he is present in his essence, he cannot be absent in his grace from them that fear him. It is from his filling heaven and earth he proves his knowledge of the designs of the false prophets; and from the same topic may as well be inferred the employment of his power and grace for his people.

The omnipresence of God is comfort *in all violent temptations.* No fiery dart can be so present with us, as God is present. The most raging devils cannot be so near us, as God is to us and them. He is present with his people to *relieve* them, and present with the devil to *manage* him to his own holy purposes. So he was with Job, defeating his enemies, and bringing him triumphantly out of those pressing trials. This presence is such a terror, that whatsoever the devil can despoil us of, he must leave this untouched. He might wound the apostle with a thorn, but he could not rifle him of the presence of divine grace, which God promised him. 2 *Cor.* 12. 7, 9. He must prevail so far as to make God cease to be God, before he can make him to be distant from us: and while this cannot be, the devils and men can no more hinder the emanations of God to the soul, than a child can cut off the rays of the sun from embellishing the earth; it is no mean support for a good man, at any time buffeted by a *messenger of Satan*, to think God stands near him and beholds how he is used. It would be a satisfaction to a king's favourite in the midst

of the violence some enemies might use to him upon a surprise, to understand that the king who loves him, stands behind a curtain, and sees the injuries he suffers; and were the devil, as considerate as he is malicious, he could not but be in great fear at God's being in the generation of the righteous, as his serpentine seed is. *Prov.* 3. 6, *There were they in great fear, for God is in the generation of the righteous.*

The omnipresence of God is a comfort in *sharp afflictions.* Good men have a comfort in this presence in their prisons, and before oppressing tribunals. In the overflowing *waters*, or scorching *flames, he is still with them;* and many times by his presence keeps the *bush from consuming*, when it seems to be all in a flame. In afflictions God shews himself most present, when friends are most absent: *When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord shall take me up, Psa.* 27. 10. Then God will stoop and gather me into his protection, *Heb. shall gather me;* alluding to those tribes that were to bring up the rear in the Israelites' march, to take care that none were left behind, and exposed to famine or wild beasts, by reason of some disease that disabled them from keeping pace with their brethren. He that is the sanctuary of his people in all calamities, is more present with them to support them, than their adversaries can be present with them to afflict them. *A present help in the time of trouble;* he is present with all things for this end; though his presence be a necessary presence, in regard of the immensity of his nature; yet the end of this presence, in that it is for the good of his people, is a voluntary presence. It is for the good of man he is present in the lower world, and principally for the good of his people, for whose sake he keeps up the world; *His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him, 2 Chron.* 16. 9. If he does not deliver good men from afflictions, he will be so present as to manage them in them, as that his glory shall issue from them, and their grace be brightened by them.*

* Chrysostome.

What a man was Paul, when he was lodged in a prison, or dragged to the courts of judicature, when he was lacerated with rods, or laden with chains! then did he shew the greatest miracles, made the judge tremble upon the bench, and brake the heart, though not the prison, of the jailor; so powerful is the presence of God in the pressures of his people. This presence outweighs all other comforts, and is more valuable to a Christian than barns of corn, or cellars of wine, to a covetous man; this presence was David's cordial in the mutinying of his soldiers. What a comfort is this in exile, or a forced desertion of our habitations! Good men may be banished from their country, but never from the presence of their protector; ye cannot say of any corner of the earth, or of any dungeon, God is not here; if you were cast out of your country to the greatest distance, you are not out of God's precinct; his arm is there to cherish the good as well as to drag out the wicked; there is the same God, the same presence in every country, as well as the same sun, moon, and stars; and were not God every where, yet he could not be meaner than his creature, the sun in the firmament, which visits every part of the habitable world in twenty-four hours.

The omnipotence of God is a comfort *in all duties.* He is present to observe, and present to accept our petitions, and answer our suits. Good men have not only the essential presence, which is common to all, but his gracious presence; not only the presence that flows from his nature, but that which flows from his promise; his essential presence makes no difference between this and that man in regard of spirituals, without this in conjunction with it; his nature is the cause of the presence of his essence; his will engaged by his truth, is the cause of the presence of his grace. He promised to meet the Israelites in the place where he should set his name, and in all places where he doth record it. *Exod.* 20. 4, *In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee;* in every place where I shall manifest the special presence of my divinity. In all places our hands may be lifted up, without doubting his ability to

hear; he dwells in the *contrite hearts*, wherever it is most in the exercise of contrition; which is usually in times of special worship, and that to revive and refresh them.

Habitation notes a special presence; though he dwell in the highest heavens in the splendour of his glory, he dwells also in the lowest hearts in the beams of his grace; as none can expel him from his dwelling in heaven; so none can reject him from his residence in the heart. *Levit.* 26. 11. The *tabernacle* had its *peculiar presence* fixed to it; his soul should not abhor them as they are washed by Christ, though they are loathsome by sin: in a greater dispensation there cannot be a less presence, since the church under the New Testament, is called the temple of the Lord, wherein he will both *dwell and walk;* or, *I will indwell in them;* 2 *Cor.* 6. 6, as if he should say, I will dwell in and in them; I will dwell in them by grace, and walk in them by exciting their graces; he will be more intimate with them than their own souls, and converse with them as the *living God*, i. e. as a God that hath life in himself, and life to convey to them in their converse with him; and shew his spiritual glory among them in a greater measure than in the temple; since that was but a heap of stones, and the figure of the christian church, the mystical body of his Son. His presence is not less in the substance than it was in the shadow; this presence of God in his ordinances is the glory of a church; as the presence of a king is the glory of a court; the defence of it too, *Zech.* 2. 5, *a wall of fire;* alluding to the fire travellers in a wilderness made to fright away wild beasts.

It is not the meanness of the place of worship that can exclude him; the second temple was not so magnificent as the first of Solomon's erecting; and the Jews seem to despond of so glorious a presence of God in the second, as they had in the first; because they thought it not so good for the entertainment of him that inhabits eternity; but God comforts them against this conceit again and again; *Hag.* 2. 3, 4, *Be strong, be strong, be strong, I am with you;* the meanness of the place shall not hinder the grandeur of my presence; no matter what the room is, so it be the presence-chamber of the king, wherein he will

favour our suits; he can every where communicate himself to our souls with a perpetual sweetness, since he is every where, and so intimate with every one that fears him. If we should see God on earth in his amiableness, as Moses did, should we not be encouraged by his presence, to present our requests to him, to echo out our praises of him? And have we not as great a ground now to do it, since he is as really present with us, as if he were visible to us? he is in the same room with us, as near to us as our souls to our bodies; not a word but he hears, not a motion but he sees, not a breath but he perceives; he is through all; he is in all.

4. The omnipresence of God is a *comfort in all special services.* God never puts any upon a hard task, but he makes promises to encourage and assist them; and the matter of the promise is that of his presence; so he assured the prophets of old when he set them difficult tasks, and strengthened Moses against the face of Pharaoh, by assuring him *he would be with his mouth, Exod.* 4. 12; and when Christ put his apostles upon a contest with the whole world, to preach a gospel that would be *foolishness to the Greeks,* and a *stumbling-block to the Jews;* he gives them a cordial only composed of his presence, *I will be with you;* it is this presence scatters by its light the darkness of our spirits. It is this that is the cause of what is done for his glory in the world; it is this that mingles itself with all that is done for his honour; it is this from whence springs all the assistance of his creatures, marked out for special purposes.

5. This presence is not without the special presence of *all his attributes.* Where his essence is, his perfections are; because they are one with his essence; yea, they are his essence, though they have their several degrees of manifestation. As in the covenant, he makes over himself as our God, not a part of himself, but his whole Deity; so in promising his presence, he means not a part of it, but the whole, the presence of all the excellencies of his nature to be manifested for our good. It is not a part of God is here, and another there, but God in his whole essence and perfections; in his wisdom to

guide us, his power to protect and support us, his mercy to pity us, his fulness to refresh us, and his goodness to relieve us. He is ready to display this or that perfection, as the necessities of his people require, and his own wisdom directs for his own honour. So that being not far from us in any excellency of his nature, we can quickly have recourse to him upon any emergency; so that if we are miserable, we have the presence of his goodness; if we want direction, we have the presence of his wisdom; if we are weak, we have the presence of his power; and should we not rejoice in it, as in the presence of a powerful, wealthy, and compassionate friend?

III. The influence which the omnipresence of God should have upon our spirits and conduct ought to be much in *the actual thoughts* of his truth. How should we enrich our understandings with the knowledge of the excellency of God, whereof this is none of the least; we should, though it be more terrible to the wicked than the presence of a lion; it is this that makes all other excellencies of the divine nature sweet: what would grace, wisdom, power signify at a distance from us? Let us frame in our minds a strong idea of it; it is this makes so great a difference between the actions of one man and another; one maintains actual thoughts of it, another doth not; though all believe it as a perfection pertaining to the infiniteness of his essence. David, or rather a greater than David, had God *always before him;* there was no time, no occasion, wherein he did not stir up some lively thoughts of him. *Psa.* 16. 8. Let us have right notions of it: imagine not God as a great King, sitting only in his majesty in heaven; acting all by his servants and ministers.

This, saith one,* is a childish and unworthy conceit of God, and may in time bring such a conceiver by degrees to deny his providence; the denial of this perfection is an axe at the root of religion; if it be not deeply imprinted in the mind, personal religion grows faint and feeble; who would fear that God that is not imagined

* Musculus.

to be a witness of his actions? Who would worship a God at a distance both from the worship and worshipper?* Let us believe this truth, but not with an idle faith, as if we did not believe it; let us know, that as wheresoever the fish moves, it is in the water; wheresoever the bird moves, it is in the air; so wheresoever we move, we are in God: as there is not a moment but we are under his mercy, so there is not a moment that we are out of his presence: Let us therefore look upon nothing, without thinking who stands by, without reflecting upon him in whom it lives, moves, and hath its being.

When you view a man, you fix your eyes upon his body, but your mind upon that invisible part that acts every member by life and motion, and makes them fit for your converse. Let us not bound our thoughts to the creatures we see, but pierce through the creature to that boundless God we do not see; we have continual remembrances of his presence, the light whereby we see, and the air whereby we live, give us perpetual notices of it, and some weak resemblance; why should we forget it? yea, what a shame is our unmindfulness of it, when every cast of our eye, every motion of our lungs, moves us to remember it? Light is in every part of the air, in every part of the world, yet not mixed with any, both remain entire in their own substance. Let us not be worse than some of the heathens, who pressed this notion upon themselves for the spiriting their actions with virtue, † "That all places were full of God." This was the means Basil used to prescribe, upon a question was asked him, How shall we do to be serious? "Mind God's presence." How shall we avoid distractions in service? "Think of God's presence." How shall we resist temptations? Oppose to them the presence of God."

1. This will be a shield *against all temptations.* God is present, is enough to blunt the weapons of hell; this will secure us from a ready compliance with any base and vile attractives, and curb that headstrong principle

* Drexel. † Omnia Diis plena.

in our nature, that would join hands with them; the thoughts of this would, like the powerful presence of God with the Israelites, take of the wheels from the chariots of our sensitive appetites, and make them perhaps move slower, at least, towards a temptation. How did Peter fling off the temptation which had worsted him, upon a look from Christ? the actuated faith of this would stifle the darts of Satan; and fire us with an anger against his solicitations, as strong as the fire that inflames the darts. Moses's sight of him that was invisible, strengthened him against the costly pleasures and luxuries of a prince's court, *Heb.* 11. 27. We are utterly senseless of a Deity, if we are not moved with this item from our consciences, "God is present."

Had our first parents actually considered the nearness of God to them, when they were tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit, they had not probably so easily been overcome by the temptation: what soldier would be so base as to revolt under the eye of a tender and obliging general? Or what man so negligent of himself, as to rob a house in the sight of a judge? Let us consider, that God is as near to observe us, as the devil to solicit us, yea nearer; the devil stands by us, but God is in us, we may have a thought the devil knows not, but not a thought but God is actually present with, as our souls are with the thoughts they think; nor can any creature attract our heart, if our minds were fixed on that invisible presence that contributes to that excellency, and sustains it, and considered that no creature could be so present with us as the Creator is.

2. It will be a spur to *holy actions*. What man would do an unworthy action, or speak an unhandsome word in the presence of his prince? The eye of the general inflames the spirit of a soldier. Why did David *keep God's testimonies?* because he considered that *all his ways are before him;* because he was persuaded his ways were present with God, God's precepts should be present with him, *Psal.* 11. 16. The same was the cause of Job's integrity, *chap.* 31. 4, *Doth he not see my ways?* To have God in our eye is the way to be sincere; *walk before me*

as in my sight, *and be thou perfect, Gen.* 17. 1. Communion with God consists chiefly in an ordering our ways as in the presence of him that is invisible. This would make us spiritual, raised, and watchful in all our passions, if we considered that God is present with us in our shops, in our chambers, in our walks, and in our meetings, as present with us as with the angels in heaven; who, though they have a presence of glory above us, yet have not a greater measure of his essential presence than we have. What an awe had Jacob upon him, when he considered God was present in Bethel, *Gen.* 28, 16. 17. If God should appear visibly to us when we were alone, should we not be reverent and serious before him?

God is every where about us, he encompasses us with his presence; should not God's seeing us, have the same influence upon us, as our seeing God? He is not more essentially present if he should so manifest himself to us than when he doth not; Who would appear defiled in the presence of a great person? Would not a man blush to be catched about some mean action, though it were not immoral? If this truth were impressed upon our spirits, we should more blush to have our souls polluted with sin in his sight. If the most sensual man be ashamed to do a dishonest action in the sight of a grave and holy man, one of great reputation for wisdom and integrity; how much more should we lift up ourselves in the ways of God, who is infinite and immense, is every where, and infinitely superior to man, and more to be regarded! We could not seriously think of his presence, but there would pass some intercourse between us; we should be putting up some petition upon the sense of our indigence; or sending up our praises to him upon the sense of his bounty. The actual thoughts of the presence of God is the life and spirit of all religion; we could not have sluggish spirits, and a careless watch, if we considered that his eye is upon us all the day.

3. *It will remove distractions in worship.* The actual thoughts of this would establish our thoughts, and bring them back when they begin to rove: the mind could not boldly rove from God, if it had lively thoughts of his presence;

the consideration of this would blow off all the froth that lies on our spirits. An eye taken up with the presence of one object, is not at leisure to be filled with another: he that looks intently upon the sun, shall have nothing for a while but the sun in his eye. Oppose to every intruding thought the idea of the Divine Omnipresence, and put it to silence by the awe of his majesty. When the master is present, scholars mind their books, keep their places, and run not over the forms to play with one another; the master's eye keeps an idle servant to his work, that otherwise would be gazing at every straw, and prating to every passenger. How soon would the remembrance of this, dash all extravagant fancies out of countenance, just as the news of the approach of a prince would make the courtiers bustle up themselves, huddle up their vain sports, and prepare themselves for a reverent behaviour in his sight. We should not dare to give God a part of our heart, when we apprehend him present with the whole; we should not dare to mock one that we knew were more inwards with us than we are with ourselves, and that beheld every motion of our mind, as well as action of our body.

2. Let us endeavour for the more *special and influential* presence of God. Let the essential presence of God be the ground of our awe, and his gracious influential presence the object of our desire. The heathen thought themselves secure if they had their little petty household-gods with them in their journeys; such seem to be the images Rachel stole from her father to accompany her travel with their blessings; she might not at that time have cast off all respect to those idols, in the acknowledgment of which she had been educated from her infancy; and they seem to be kept by her, till God called Jacob to Bethel, after the rape of Dinah, when Jacob called for the strange gods, and hid them under the oak. *Gen.* 31. 39. and 35. 4. We should look after the gracious presence of God in all our actions; as travellers that have charge of money or jewels, desire to keep themselves in company that may protect them from highwaymen that would rifle them. Since we have the concerns of the eternal happiness of our souls upon our hands, we

should endeavour to have God's merciful and powerful presence with us in all our ways, *Psal.* 14. 5, *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths;* acknowledge him before any action, by imploring his blessing; acknowledge him after, by rendering him the glory; acknowledge his presence before worship, in worship, after worship: it is this presence makes a kind of heaven upon earth, causeth affliction to put off the nature of misery.

How much will the presence of the sun outshine the stars of lesser comforts, and fully answer the want of them! The ark of God going before us, can only make all things successful; it was this led the Israelites over Jordan, and settled them in Canaan. Without this we signify nothing, though we live without this, we cannot be distinguished for ever from devils; his essential presence they have, and if we have no more we shall be no better. It is the enlivening, fructifying presence of the sun, that revives the languishing earth; and this only can repair our ruined soul. Let it be therefore our desire, that as he fills heaven and earth by his essence, he may fill our understandings and wills by his grace; that we may have another kind of presence with us, than animals have in their brutish state, or devils in their chains. His essential presence maintains our being, but his gracious presence confers and continues happiness.

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